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"BEING CLOSE TO THE PEOPLE":

A Conversation with Former Governor Mike Hayden

edited by Bob Beatty

John Michael Hayden, born in Colby, Kansas, on March 16, 1944, served as the state's forty-first chief executive from January 12, 1987, to January 14, 1991. Hayden marked a number of Kansas gubernatorial "firsts" when he took office: he was the first governor to be elected from northwest Kansas, the first Vietnam veteran, and the first to have a background in wildlife conservation and biology.[1] *He also became a "first" after leaving office. As secretary of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), Hayden is the first former Kansas governor to serve in a cabinet-level capacity for his Republican and Democratic predecessors. Hayden entered the governor's office after fourteen years of experience in the Kansas house, winning his first election in 1972 by defeating incumbent Milton Nitsch in the Republican primary and then easily dispatching Democrat Vernon Mickey in the general election. From there he rose*

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1. Hayden earned his master's degree in biology from Fort Hays State University in 1974 and his BA in wildlife conservation from Kansas State University in 1966. See Homer E. Socolofsky, *Kansas Governors* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 227–30; "Hayden becomes state's 41st governor," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, January 13, 1987; H. Edward Flentje, ed., *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden: Advancing a Progressive Agenda* (Wichita, Kans.: Hugo Wall School of Urban and Public Affairs, Wichita State University, 2002), 10.

rapidly up the leadership ladder in the legislature, serving as chairman of the powerful house Ways and Means Committee and two terms as speaker of the house from 1983 until 1986.[2]

In 1986, with Governor John Carlin ineligible to run for a third consecutive term due to term limits, Hayden was, in the words of one of his top advisors, H. Edward Flentje, "an unlikely prospect for governor." Flentje noted that Hayden entered the race "against overwhelming odds, disadvantaged by geography and political base." Moreover, as speaker of the house Hayden had made several controversial votes, including voting for a one-cent sales tax increase in 1986 and against allowing voters to decide the questions of liquor by the drink and parimutuel wagering.[3] *In the crowded, seven-person GOP primary, Hayden defeated the three main candidates by running a focused campaign that emphasized his farm, veteran, and legislative background, while also aiming to rack up large vote margins in Kansas's many rural counties. The strategy worked and Hayden garnered 36 percent of the primary vote, with Wichita businessman Larry Jones receiving 31 percent, Secretary of State Jack Brier 13 percent, Pittsburg businessman Gene Bicknell 9 percent, and lawyer and anti-abortion advocate Richard Peckham almost 7 percent.*[4] *In the general election Hayden defeated Lieutenant Governor Tom Docking—son of former Kansas Governor Robert Docking and grandson of former Governor George Docking—in a very close race, 52 to 48 percent. Again Hayden did very well with the rural vote, garnering a 51,000 vote cushion from eighty-five of the smaller rural counties, countering Docking's 26,000 vote lead in the five largest urban counties. The race spurred a then-record number of votes (840,605) for a gubernatorial election held in a year without a presidential election.*[5] *The campaign was hard fought, although as Hayden notes today, without animosity, as the candidates "admired each other personally."*

To call Mike Hayden an activist governor is probably an understatement, as his four years in office were characterized by almost non-stop action on a variety of issues. Flentje wrote that Hayden moved aggressively to set his policy agenda on a number of key issues and laid "specific proposals before the legislature—then engaged and cajoled state lawmakers into resolving conflicts. . . . He set a public agenda and fully engaged the political process."[6] *Under his leadership the legislature in 1989 passed a comprehensive, eight-year state highway plan that committed $1.8 billion towards road construction and maintenance. On the environmental front, Hayden consolidated independent parks and wildlife agencies into the cabinet-level Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and also in 1989 pushed for the adoption of a state water plan fund that would invest an additional $200 million in protecting Kansas environmental and water resources. During his term Hayden oversaw dramatic changes in tax codes and property tax appraisal and the expansion of state correctional facilities. He also addressed the issues of drug and alcohol abuse, appointing a special assistant in charge of substance abuse policies and pushing the legislature to pass laws increasing penalties for drunk driving and drug trafficking, banning smoking from public schools, and requiring drug testing for state employees.*[7]

During his tenure Hayden tried to be a "public" governor, holding hundreds of town meetings across the state to talk about his initiatives and policy priorities, and speaking to thousands of Kansas schoolchildren about subjects that were close to his heart: the need to protect the state's environment and how important it was for kids to stay away from drugs and alcohol. His populist bent is best exemplified by a unique program Hayden instituted called "Tell the Governor," where any Kansas citizen could visit with Governor Hayden on any topic for five minutes.[8]

In 1990 Hayden faced a difficult reelection climate since, as governor, he was blamed by voters who were not happy about the property and income tax changes that came into effect at the state and federal level. In the GOP gubernatorial primary, Hayden faced a well-financed anti-tax advocate named Nestor R. Weigand, Jr., but squeaked out a narrow 45 percent to 42 percent victory. He was not as fortunate in the general election, losing to Joan Finney, a four-term Democratic state treasurer from Topeka, by a six-point margin.[9]

2. Secretary of State, *State of Kansas, Election Statistics, 1971 Special Election, 1972 Primary and Special Elections, 1972 General Elections* (Topeka: State Printer, 1973), 69, 140; Secretary of State, *State of Kansas, Election Statistics, 1974 Primary and Special Elections, 1974 General Election* (Topeka: State Printer, 1975), 59, 115; Lynn Hellebust, ed., *Kansas Legislative Handbook, 1978* (Topeka: Government Research Service, 1978); Hellebust, ed., *Kansas Legislative Handbook, 1987* (Topeka: Government Research Service, 1987).

3. Flentje, *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden*, 3.

4. Concentrating on the rural vote certainly paid dividends. Hayden received 57 percent of the vote in the big western Kansas First Congressional District. He also was strong in the Topeka-centered Second Congressional District, getting 38 percent of its vote. The other two Republican contenders, who together carried about 3 percent of the total vote, were Barbara Pomeroy and Bill D. McDonald. "Lawyer to Declare Candidacy," *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, January 21, 1986; "Pittsburg businessman joins GOP gubernatorial race," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, April 15, 1986; "Hayden rallies to win nomination," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, August 6, 1986; Secretary of State, *Election Statistics, State of Kansas, 1986 Primary and General Elections* (Topeka: Secretary of State, [1987]); Hellebust, *Kansas Legislative Handbook, 1987*.

5. Flentje, *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden*, 5; *Election Statistics, 1986*, 74–75.

6. Flentje, *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden*, 262, 265; Socolofsky, *Kansas Governors*, 228–29.

7. Socolofsky, *Kansas Governors*, 228–30; Flentje, *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden*, 55–190.

8. For the governor's comments on "Tell the Governor," see below, page 67.

9. The final tally was Hayden/Priddle, 333,589; Finney/Francisco, 380,609; Campbell/Cline, 69,127. Hayden lost with 42.6 percent to Finney's 48.6 percent. Secretary of State, *Election Statistics, State of Kansas, 1990 Primary and General Elections* (Topeka: Secretary of State, [1991]), 41–46, 110–12.

This article is excerpted from two interviews conducted with Mike Hayden in November 2003 and September 2008. Interviewer questions have been omitted, and footnotes have been added to provide further explication of topics and relevant source citations. Video footage and a complete transcript of the November 24, 2003, interview, which was part of a series of conversations with Kansas's six surviving governors, as well as a complete transcript of the 2008 interview, are available at www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2009spring.htm. The overall project that gave rise to the interviews was an initiative by Bob Beatty and Mark Peterson, both of the political science department at Washburn University, designed to capture on video the histories of Kansas governors John Anderson, William Avery, John Carlin, Mike Hayden, Bill Graves, and Kathleen Sebelius. "'Being Close to the People': A conversation with Former Governor Mike Hayden" is the fourth in a series of articles based on those interviews.[10]

Beginnings

I was very fortunate to grow up in a small town in far western Kansas. Atwood [in Rawlins County] is our hometown. And I come from a family of farmers. My dad [Irven Wesley Hayden] farmed for forty years and my brother farms and is still farming today, the same land. It's the same land that my grandparents had when they were married in 1915. So it gave me a great sense of the soil, great sense of the land itself and particularly, a sense of what it was like to grow up in a small town and to be in a rural community. And that was very, very helpful to me throughout my years in the legislature and my years in the governorship because I always felt a closeness to Kansas, a closeness to the communities.[11]

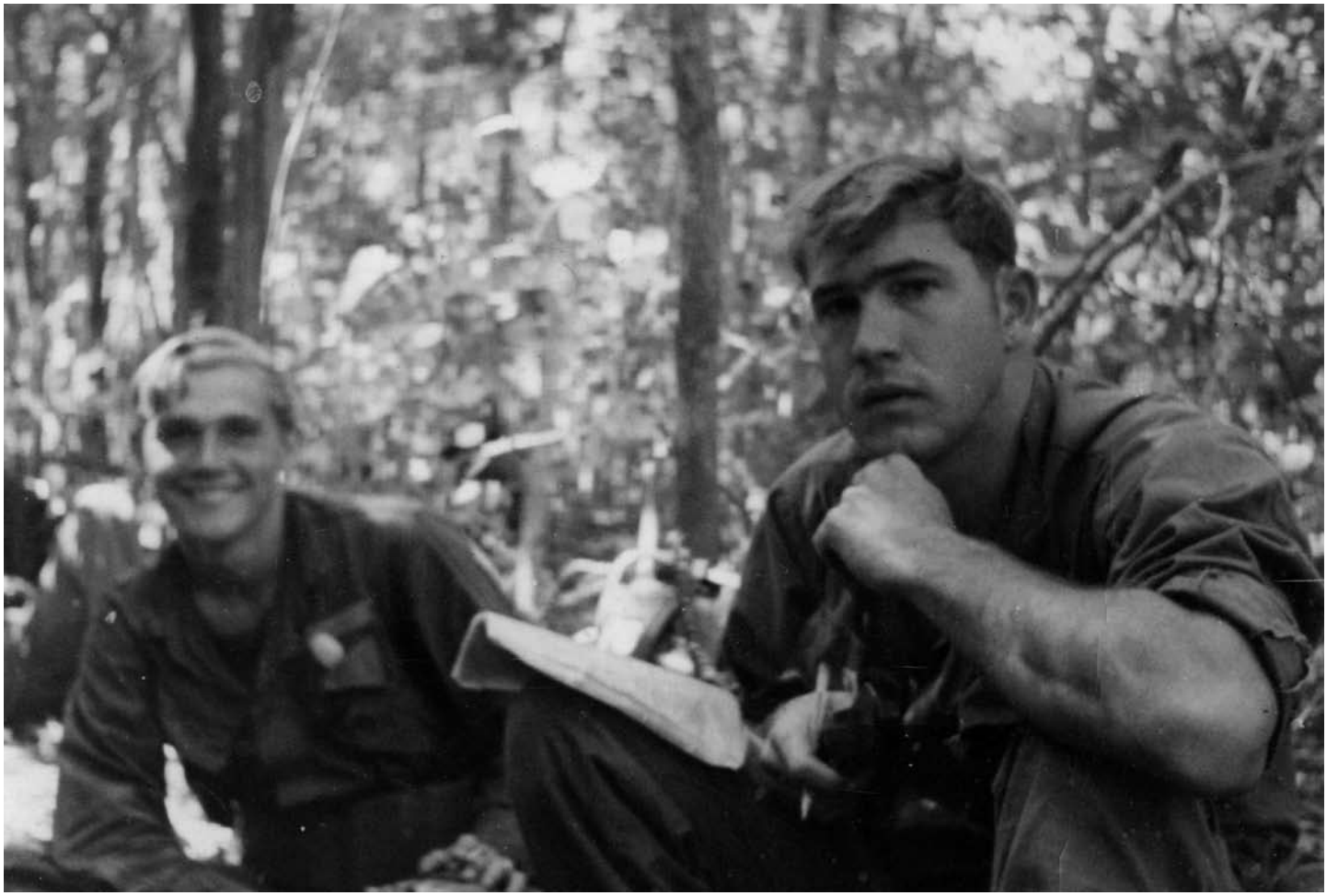
I also came from a family of public servants. My grandfather was mayor, my mother [Ruth Kelley Hayden], and grandmother were school board members, and my father was a county commissioner and city councilman. So around our dinner table there was always a conversation about politics and public policy and public service.[12] I realized very early on that I really wasn't cut out to be a farmer. I was always interested in the natural world. So when I was riding the tractor, you know, I'd be watching the hawks, and the jackrabbits, and the pheasants, and the songbirds, and making note of them instead of plowing a straight furrow. In fact my furrows looked like snakes. I loved being out of doors and being on the land, but my interest was not cultivation, it was not producing; it was understanding the natural world associated with the land. Which is ultimately why I got a degree in wildlife and later a degree in biology. So, I was never interested in agriculture production but I was always interested in the natural resource values of the farm.

In fact, I remember very poignantly a story. When we were in school we had to read an essay by President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower, and it was called, "An Open Letter to the American Student." Eisenhower—who was a Kansan, of course, and who grew up in a very small town [Abilene]—had a line in there that I'll never forget. He said, "There is more to life than plowing a straight furrow." That had a big impact on me and I think probably gave me a vision to look beyond the farm and to look beyond my own community where I grew up and really kind of set in motion my whole idea of furthering my education, first at Kansas State University (K-State) and then after Vietnam at Fort Hays State University. I've never forgotten that. I think the words of Eisenhower rang in my ears for a long time, that there was really a calling for me beyond the farm. And that's why I

10. For this published version of the interviews with Governor Hayden, the 2003 and 2008 interviews have been merged and passages have been omitted and reordered in some instances for clarity and narrative effect. The words are the governor's, however, and the editor has not altered the meaning or original intent in any way. See also Bob Beatty, ed., "'For the Benefit of the People': A Conversation with Former Governor John Anderson, Jr.," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 30 (Winter 2007–2008): 252–69, also available at www.kshs.org /publicat/history/2007winter.htm; Bob Beatty, ed., "'You Have to Like People': A Conversation with Former Governor William H. Avery," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 31 (Spring 2008): 48–67, also available at www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2008spring.htm; Bob Beatty, ed., "'Be Willing to Take Some Risks to Make Things Happen': A Conversation with Former Governor John W. Carlin," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 31 (Summer 2008): 114–40, also available at www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2008summer.htm.

11. Hayden discussed his background and the dramatic demographic changes in Kansas since his boyhood in a 2007 article: J. Michael Hayden, "Were the Poppers Right? Outmigration and the Changing Economy of the Great Plains," *Online Journal of Rural Research and Policy* 2 (June 1, 2007), http://ojrrp.org/journals/ojrrp/article/viewFile/36/34. He also discussed his family and the examples they set for him and the impact they had on his ambitions in his inaugural address on January 12, 1987, saying, "I stand before you because of a dream. Perhaps that dream was born over 100 years ago when my great grandmother pioneered in western Kansas. . . . This certainly was a dream nurtured by my father as he worked the soil. The dream nurtured by my mother as she raised seven children. And it was undoubtedly a dream reinforced in the jungle of Vietnam. . . . And that dream today has come true and we want our lives to be an example for those with big dreams. For those with the courage to go on when others quit." "Inaugural address," January 12, 1987, in Flentje, *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden*, 10.

12. For additional information on the Hayden and Kelley families see the following articles in Rawlins County History Book Committee, comp., *History of Rawlins County, Kansas, Volume 1* (Atwood, Kans.: Rawlins County Genealogical Society, 1988): Ruth Kelley Hayden, "Irven and Ruth (Hopkins) Hayden," 381; Irv and Ruth Hayden, "Irven W., Jr. and Ruth (Kelley) Hayden," 381–82; Ruth Kelley Hayden, "Michael and Pattie [*sic*] (Rooney) Hayden," 382. Ruth Kelley Hayden, *The Time That Was: The Second Forty Years, 1915–1955* (Colby, Kans.: H. F. Davis Memorial Library, 1972), includes general Rawlins County history and information on the author's family.



Of his tour in Vietnam, Hayden recalled, "I went in April of '69 and I came home in May of '70. . . . My Vietnam experience, unlike perhaps many others, shaped my concern for the country, my concern for public policy, my concern for my fellow man. . . . I saw the horrible affects of war firsthand and I never forgot that. I also saw firsthand the value of leadership, the importance of leadership." Hayden is pictured here (right) in Vietnam with a fellow soldier, Buford Murphy. Image courtesy of Mike Hayden.

went to Kansas State University, [even though] my whole family went to KU [University of Kansas] . . . because the only place you could get wildlife conservation was at Kansas State, in Kansas, and I couldn't afford the out-of-state tuition to go to Colorado State, or some other land grant where it was taught.

I went to K-State in 1962 and graduated in 1966. In 1964 we had a huge mock political convention. It was kind of an ironic thing because normally you think of a mock political convention as the Democrats and the Republicans each having a separate convention. Well, this was designed so that it encompassed all the candidates. Our fraternity was assigned Texas, and I was the chief delegate from Texas. Of course it was [President Lyndon B.] Johnson running against [U.S. Senator Barry] Goldwater, so it was my job at this mock political convention to give the nominating speech for Lyndon Johnson, but ironically, Goldwater won the convention.

Now, my mother actually came from a Democrat family, but when she married my dad, she became a Republican. So, I came from a family of Republicans. The first time I got to vote was in '68, because I was only twenty in the '64 election. . . . [and] you had to be twenty-one then. So I registered as a Republican. Actually, ironically, when I ran for the first time for the legislature, some people remembered that mock political convention and they thought I was a Democrat because, of course, I gave the nominating speech for Johnson. And so, one of the things I had to overcome in

that first campaign was kind of a whisper campaign that I was really a Democrat!

I was involved in student politics to some extent, and it was a time of unrest, the Vietnam War. I was there [at K-State] when they burned down the auditorium—I was still in school—and that was partially a protest to the Vietnam War.[13] It was a time of a lot of political activity on campus. I didn't pay much mind to those people who protested it. I come from a family of veterans. My grandfather fought at Verdun [in France] in World War I; my dad fought on the Burma Road in World War II. Back in those days you could get a student deferment until you graduated, but I knew that as soon as my degree was completed my deferment would end, and I was fully prepared to go to the army; I was fully prepared to be drafted. I had really no qualms about that. I just hoped that I was able to get my degree first, which I was, so I had no misgivings about the military at all.

Vietnam

I went [to Vietnam] in April of '69 and I came home in May of '70. So I was there for thirteen months.[14] I was a second lieutenant in the infantry—in the straight leg infantry—which means I was not a paratrooper, even though I wanted to be one desperately. I never got to jump. Of course I'd been to jungle school so I was already somewhat acclimatized to the weather and everything. Jungle school [was] in Panama, and so they ship you down there for a couple weeks to learn to live in the jungle; the heat, humidity, and the rain, and all that kind of stuff. And then they shipped us over. Actually, I went straight out to the jungle by helicopter, into the central highlands of Vietnam, in the mountains right on the Cambodian border. I spent my whole time no further than fifty miles from Cambodia, but in most cases a mile and a half or two from Cambodia, right along the Ho Chi Minh trail.

The first thing I got was a platoon. We just went on search and destroy missions, as either a platoon or as a company, mostly as a company, because you needed size. Then after a couple of months I was promoted to a recon [reconnaissance] platoon, and that's where you go on long-range patrols and stealth patrols. You don't try to engage the enemy, you try to spy on them, you try to call in artillery or air strikes or call in reinforcements or whatever, but you try to remain unseen to the enemy.

Usually you took three day's supplies, and you carry them on your back. . . . We'd usually go in by chopper, and they'd leave you off and most of the time you'd have radio contact.

[One of my encounters with the North Vietnamese] was on the day that the [Kansas City] Chiefs won the Super Bowl [on January 11, 1970]. Of course I was from Kansas, and everybody wanted to bet on the [Minnesota] Vikings. And they said, "Oh God, we'll give you twenty points; you know, the Kansas City Chiefs, they don't have a damn prayer." I only had a couple hundred bucks on me, so I bet it all on the Chiefs. I stayed up all night and listened to the Chiefs and of course the further they got ahead, the thinner the crowd got, so by the time the ballgame was over, I was about the only one left listening to the radio.

The next morning, we get up and we're on this fire base right next to a highway and one of our jobs is to secure that highway so there could be safe passage. Well, the day before some people had seen some suspicious activity just south of the road, so they sent in a light observation helicopter, right after sunup when it was light enough to see, sent this old boy in to see what he could see from the air. And in those, a lot of the time, there would be just a single pilot. You know, no doors on it, glass bubble, get down real low, you could dodge it among the trees and everything. Well, I'll be damned, he got shot down. So, they sent us in to get him out. It wasn't half a mile over there and you could see smoke rising from where the chopper had gone in.

Well, as it happens, he got out alive. But what we didn't know—there was a North Vietnamese (NVA) battalion dug in there. We go in and we walk right into this NVA battalion. Well, it got hot as hell! We call for reinforcement and they brought in tanks to help us.[15]

13. A spirit of student activism emerged at Kansas State University in the mid-1960s, as it did on campuses throughout the country. At first, it was directed at local practices of racial discrimination and substandard academic facilities, which seemed to get less attention than athletics; later in the decade protest activity focused more on the Vietnam War. "The old Auditorium became an object of odium for a group whose discontent focused on the deplorable facilities provided devotees of the fine arts," explained historian James C. Carey. It was in this atmosphere, and not in protest of America's ill-conceived military deployments, that student arsonists "fired the old Auditorium" on January 15, 1965. Serious protests directed toward R.O.T.C. activities and thus the war did not begin on the Manhattan campus until 1967. An arsonist's fire gutted the Nichols Gym in December 1968 during a particularly tense period. James C. Carey, *Kansas State University: The Quest for Identity* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), 219–28.

14. Among the military decorations Hayden received for his service in Vietnam were two Bronze Stars, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Soldier's Medal.

15. See the complete 2008 interview transcript at www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2009spring.htm for additional comments on Hayden's Vietnam experiences.

Most firefights don't last very long. They're very quick engagements, some only last just a matter of minutes. Usually those are surprise encounters, where your point man or your point has engaged the enemy unknowingly, maybe they try to ambush you, maybe they know you're coming and try to ambush you. Those kinds of firefights, a long one would be thirty minutes. The first firefight I was ever into probably lasted about three hours, because they had us ambushed and pinned down, and they really laid a lot of fire on us, and the artillery observer got hit right away; we couldn't call in artillery. There was nowhere to land reinforcements; the jungle was so heavy. We had to cut LZs [landing zones] in order to get the birds in. But most firefights are very short lived.

There is no way to prepare for [losing men]. There is no way to prepare for it. You know it is a part of war, and so you always have a concern, but you also know you're in a very dangerous situation and that people do get killed all the time, and that might be from friendly fire, that might be from accidents, that might be from enemy fire. It's a highly dangerous situation, so what you try to do, as an officer, is you try to minimize the danger; you try to reduce the chances of people getting killed. You can't ever eliminate it entirely because the enemy is always trying to outthink you, but you try to minimize casualties, because it's easy to get killed in war; you don't have to be very smart to get killed. You've got to be a hell of a lot smarter to stay alive. It's a real mental game, particularly in guerilla warfare, you know, where there's not clear lines, where the people you see, actually *see*, in the daytime in civilian clothes might be the very ones who are mining the road at night in hopes that you'll hit it with your jeep tomorrow.

The enemy was very determined. I was there when Ho Chi Minh died [on September 2, 1969], and clearly the North Vietnamese were motivated. They saw it as the salvation of their country. The South Vietnamese, they were not near as motivated. They relied essentially on United States and U.S. financial and troop support. They didn't want us to come home. They didn't really believe in Vietnamization, you know, because they wanted us to protect them. That's really what it boiled down too. They weren't great fighters. The North Vietnamese were just the opposite. They were gonna fight to the death, because in their mind it was their country, and they were fighting to save it. The South Vietnamese did not have that same passion at all.[16]

My Vietnam experience, unlike perhaps many others, shaped my concern for the country, my concern for public policy, my concern for my fellow man. I was very fortunate in Vietnam in that I lived in the jungle for the better part of a year. We were in many difficult firefights. I was on the Cambodian invasions when President [Richard M.] Nixon ordered us into Cambodia in May of 1970. In fact, I only had a few days to remain in the army at that time and I was fortunate in that I never got wounded. But I saw the horrible affects of war firsthand and I never forgot that. I also saw firsthand the value of leadership, the importance of leadership.

I remember, in fact, one time [former Kansas Governor] Alf Landon called me out of the blue really and he said, "I want to endorse you for governor." Of course I was deeply honored that he would do that, and I said to him one time, "Governor Landon, what prompted you to do that?" And he said, "Well, you've been there under fire," and I never forgot that.[17] Vietnam did shape my life, but it shaped it in a very positive way and I'm thankful for that experience, and it really did kind of give me the basis of leadership I needed to ultimately become the governor of our state.

In less than twenty-four hours I went from the field in Vietnam to Cam Ranh Bay to Fort Lewis, Washington, and by five o'clock that evening, I was a civilian. The first thing I wanted to do was see my wife, [since] I hadn't seen her for six or seven months.[18] I wanted to go home to my hometown; you know, to see my family and to see everybody in Atwood, my friends, things like that.

My biggest problem was kind of the transition; you live in the jungle for a long time, and you don't eat regular or you don't have contact as regular society. I did have a few nightmares. I mean, when you're in an intense environment and people are shooting at you and you're shooting at them and then to make that transition in twenty-four hours or a little more, to be a civilian on the street, you know, that is a culture shock. That was probably the biggest transition I had. It probably took me several months to get over the fact that I wasn't in the army anymore, that I truly was a civilian and nobody was shooting at me. But I didn't have a lot of societal problems because my family were veterans, we came from a small town. . . . So it was a very easy transition. I was very fortunate in that respect.

16. See Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin, 1984).

17. Alfred M. Landon of Topeka, formerly of Independence, Kansas, was the state's twenty-sixth governor, serving from 1933 until 1937. Socolofsky, *Kansas Governors*, 172–79.

18. Hayden had married Patricia Ann "Patti" Rooney on August 26, 1968; their two daughters, Chelsi Kay and Anne Kelley, were born in 1975 and 1981 respectively. See Nell Linder Richmond, ed., *Kansas First Families at Home*, 2nd ed. (Topeka, Kansas: Friends of Cedar Crest Association 1993), 23–27; Socolofsky, *Kansas Governors*, 227.

The Legislative Years, 1972–1986

My last semester in graduate school, while I was teaching a biology lab, is when I ran for the legislature. Actually, I was at school at Fort Hays University while my home district was in northwest Kansas, my home. So you had to figure how you're going to run up there in four counties when you're down at Hays, which is 120 miles away. In fact that's one of the things my opponent used against me in my first race. I beat the incumbent, Milton Nitsch [in the Republican primary]. He said, "Well look, this kid has never had a job, he's never paid taxes, he's still in school." So I had to overcome all that. [Nitsch] was a real good guy, a car dealer and cattleman from Oberlin [in Decatur County].[19]

I decided to [run in 1972] because of my concern for the environment and conservation. Milton was a very pro-business person. He was a good person, but he was very, very pro-business, and as a consequence he voted against almost every bill on environmental improvement or conservation. Being a hunter and fisherman and majoring in wildlife and now getting a degree in biology, natural resource issues were very important to me. And after I saw his "no" votes on a couple key issues I said, "I think I'll run," and told [my wife] Patti that, and went down and filed. She said, "You're crazy!" [But I had] made the determination that I would run. I remember calling the county chairman in my home county [Robert A. "Bob" Creighton], who ultimately ended up being chairman of my campaign for governor many years later. I said to him, "I'm going to run for the legislature and I would like your help." I think I was twenty-eight at the time. He said, "Well I'll help you, but you know we've never elected anybody under fifty before."

Several things line up when you ask how I won. One is, my family has very deep roots there. My grandfather died as mayor in 1924, and my mother was a school board member, and my dad was a county commissioner—huge, deep roots in the community, and that extended even beyond county lines. Another thing was, when Milton Nitsch ran for reelection in 1970, he just barely won the Republican primary. It was very close. And up there geography's a big deal. You're talking about a multi-county district, so a lot of it has to do with where you live, because that's what's on the ballot next to your name. It says Atwood, or Oberlin, or St. Francis, or you know, wherever you're from. So geography was an element. I knew [Nitsch] couldn't be very strong because he just barely won reelection. Another thing was that my opponent underestimated me. He thought, well, this young kid, he's twenty-eight years old, he can't possibly win, so he didn't work near as hard as he should of. But I worked hard, and I had good organization. I had good people helping me design the campaign: figuring how many votes were going to be cast, figuring out how many you needed out of each precinct, you know, doing some polling, that kind of thing, to get a feel for it. It wasn't really much of an issue-oriented campaign in that sense. It was more geography and personality, really is what it boiled down to, in that first race. And it was a hard-fought primary; I think we won by 250 votes. And then I ultimately won the general election. [I beat Democratic candidate], Vernon Mickey. He was the former mayor of Hoxie [in Sheridan County].[20] So, what it does show you is that while the power of incumbency is important, there is always room for new ideas, there is room for new people constantly in public service.

[When I arrived in Topeka in January 1973, Governor] Bob Docking was in his last term. He was very smart politically. And the real truth is issues were not very sophisticated in those days. State government was very small. He never had to face abortion, he never had to face gay rights, he never even had to face the funding of Washburn University. I mean the real truth is, it was a small-time deal. There wasn't even a Department of Health and Environment or even a Department of Commerce, so you could get up and say, "Hey, I'm against taxes," and you could get away with it because there wasn't much to state government. I was here in the last sixty-day legislative session in 1974. We were done on my birthday, the 16th of March; we went home. It was over. I was here when we had the first billion-dollar budget. It was in Docking's last year, that we first

19. Hayden's was House District No. 120, which then included Cheyenne, Decatur, Rawlins, and Sheridan counties. Milton A. Nitsch, who had been born in Oberlin in 1917 and was the president of an automobile and farm implement business, was first appointed to the unexpired house term of Ernie R. Woodard in 1970. He won the August primary that year by a vote of 1,105 to 959 and had no Democratic opposition in the subsequent general election. Oberlin is the county seat of Decatur County, which is just east of Hayden's Rawlins County. *1971–1972 Kansas Legislative Directory* (Topeka: Midwest Industry Magazine, [1972]), 121; Secretary of State, *State of Kansas, Election Statistics, 1970 Primary and General Elections* (Topeka: State Printer, 1971), 64, 118.

20. Hayden bested Nitsch in the August 1, 1972, Republican primary election by at vote of 1,832 to 1,535, and then outpolled Vernon L. Mickey in November by more than 1,300 votes (Hayden, 4,723; Mickey, 3,408). In a rematch two years later, Hayden increased his margin of victory over the same opponent (Hayden, 4,258; Mickey, 2,880). Mickey, who was thirty-four years Hayden's senior, owned and operated a funeral home in Hoxie, had many years of service on the local school board, and was a two-term mayor. David L. Wollrich, *Kansas Voter's Guide: 1974 General Election Edition* (Lawrence: Institute for Social and Environmental Studies, University of Kansas, 1974), 133; *Election Statistics . . . 1972 Primary and Special Elections, 1972 General Elections*, 69, 140; *Election Statistics, 1974 Primary and Special Elections, 1974 General Election*, 59, 115.

went over a billion dollars. There was no Internet, there were no computers, there were only three channels on TV. So most people in those days got their news from the newspapers. So statehouse reporters, in those days, they had a lot of sway because that's how people got the news.[21]

Actually, I had been in the legislature a long, long time before I ever thought about entering the governor's race at all. I'm reminded of [Gerald R.] "Jerry" Ford, when he was vice president [of the United States], and he had been minority leader in the House [of Representatives] for many, many years. And then, of course, when President Nixon resigned, he became president of the United States. They said to him, "Mr. President, how does it feel?" He said, "Well, you know, all I really ever wanted to be was Speaker of the House." And that was kind of my goal, to be speaker of the [Kansas] house. And as I sat in the back row of the legislature, one day the speaker did something, and I turned to my seatmate and I said, "Well how can he do that?" And he said, "Well remember, the power of the speaker is awesome." I never forgot that. So, my whole career really was pointed toward me becoming speaker of the house, which I did become, and I had a wonderful time serving four years as speaker.

I was very lucky, and I had some real good breaks and I had some great people that helped me. What happened was that in December of 1974, I remember I was ice fishing. I got home and Patti said the speaker called, and he wants you to call him back. [Duane S.] "Pete" McGill [was] speaker of the house.[22] I'd just completed my freshman year, just been reelected, beat Vernon Mickey for the second time. And [McGill] said, "We're organizing the committees, and I'm wanting some guys from western Kansas and some young guys, and I'd like to put you on the Ways and Means Committee." In fact, what I actually said to him was, "Well, you know Mr. Speaker, what I really want to do is be on the Natural Resources Committee." And he said, "Why don't you give the Ways and Means a try?" So that's the first big break because then all of a sudden you're learning the budget. All of a sudden you're really up close to the workings of state government because everybody's gotta come through that committee, every dollar. So you're all of a sudden starting to see how everything flows together. Instead of just being somebody down at the well of the house rambling on, you're starting to see how you put this thing together a piece at a time. And every agency head comes in there, you know, so you're starting to get a feel for it.

Then, [in 1976] Pete McGill's coming to the end of his two terms; nobody's ever served as speaker for more than four consecutive years. It is a tradition, but it's not a rule. Well, Pete tried to make a play to serve longer than that, and there was a rebellion. He started lining up the votes for a third term as speaker. And even though he was very popular and very, very powerful, that met with huge opposition. A group of us got together, a group of young guys, and said, "Hey, Pete's been a good speaker, but the rule of four years is a good rule, and we ought to have new leadership." Well, ultimately then what Pete did, was he announced that he was not running for reelection, and in fact he ended up running for Congress. Of course that was the Watergate fallout, the Jimmy Carter era, so that's when the Democrats gained control of the [Kansas] house. So I go back on the Ways and Means Committee, but now I am ranking member on the minority side.[23] Well, that was a great lesson too, because I was able then to learn about the minority side. You're there, you get to speak up, but the real

21. For more on the politically savvy Docking and his administration, see Joel Paddock, "The Gubernatorial Campaigns of Robert Docking, 1966–1972," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 31 (Summer 2008): 86–103, also available at http://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2008summer.htm; see also Beatty, "'You Have to Like People': A Conversation with Former Governor William H. Avery," 48–67; Beatty, "'Be Willing to Take Some Risks to Make Things Happen': A Conversation with Former Governor John W. Carlin," 114–40.

22. Pete McGill, a Winfield Republican born in 1922, fought in the Pacific theater of operations during World War II, and, among other things, owned and operated several restaurants after returning from the war. By the time Hayden launched his political career, McGill, a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1964, had already been a force in Kansas politics for over a decade. He died at Overland Park, Kansas, on December 21, 2003. *1971–1972 Kansas Legislative Directory*, 98; see also, "A Resolution in Memory of Duane S. 'Pete' McGill," House Resolution No. 6014, http://www.kslegislature.org/enrollbills/approved/2004/6014.pdf; Virgil W. Dean, ed., "Seeking 'Realism and a Little Rationality' in Government: The Observations of Former Governor Robert F. Bennett," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 31 (Summer 2008): 106–7n5; "State Legislators Past and Present," State Library of Kansas, http://www.kslib.info/legislators/index.html#listing.

23. In 1976 a solid majority of Sunflower State voters backed the Republican presidential ticket, incumbent Gerald Ford and running mate Senator Bob Dole of Kansas, but the Democratic Party did quite well overall in congressional and legislative contests. Democrats won majority control of the state house and two of five congressional seats: Martha Keys, Second District, and Dan Glickman, Fourth District. Pete McGill chose not to run for reelection in 1976 and then entered the Republican Party primary for the Fifth District congressional seat in 1978. The incumbent, eight-term Republican Congressman Joe Skubitz of Pittsburg, chose not to seek reelection that year, so the field was wide open. In a five-way Republican race, McGill came in a somewhat distant third behind Robert "Bob" Whittaker, who ultimately won the seat in November, and Don Johnston. Secretary of State, *State of Kansas, Election Statistics, 1976 Primary, 1976 General Election* (Topeka: State Printer, [1977]), 75–76; Secretary of State, *State of Kansas, Election Statistics, 1978, Primary and General Elections* (Topeka: State Printer, [1979]), 25, 67.

Hayden recalled that he became chairman of the Ways and Means Committee because his "good friend" William Wallace "Bill" Bunten passed on the position, instead taking the vice chairmanship. Bunten, pictured here (left) with Hayden during their house years, served in the Kansas House of Representatives from 1963 until 1991 and the state senate from 2003 to 2005. He was elected mayor of Topeka in 2005. Image courtesy of David J. Heinemann, Topeka, Kansas.

truth is you don't get to control many votes or anything. [John] Carlin is speaker, and so I get to know him a lot better. Then in '78 when Carlin beats [Robert F.] Bennett [in the gubernatorial race], we won the house back. It was only a two-year deal, and then we win the house back.

Then Wendell Lady [who had served as minority leader] became speaker. He made me the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. My good friend [William Wallace] "Bill" Bunten was actually entitled to it. He should have had it. But he was gracious enough that when the speaker went to him, he said, "No, I'll be vice chairman." He actually served eight years as vice chairman and [later] eight years as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. So, my first break was Pete McGill appointing me to the committee, my second break was alignment with Wendell Lady, who became speaker, and then my third break was my friendship with Bill Bunten, because Bill was the one that kind of acquiesced and said no, let Mike have it and I'll take the second seat, which he did. To be honest with you, I never really thought much about being speaker [either]; it just kind of fell to me. You know, after you've been chairman of the Ways and Means for four years, you're obviously one of the top leaders of the house, and some of the other leaders weren't ready to be speaker. And some of the others were contentious. We had Joe Hoagland, he was majority leader for a couple years; well that was kind of contentious. He bowed out, so I was kind of the one person left standing really.[24]

24. Wendall E. Lady, an Overland Park Republican, was first elected to the legislature in 1968 and was speaker of the house from 1979 to 1980 and 1981 to 1982. Born at Topeka in 1930, William Wallace "Bill" Bunten served in the Kansas House of Representatives from 1963 until 1991 and the state senate from 2003 to 2005. He was elected mayor of Topeka in 2005. Joseph J. Hoagland, an Overland Park lawyer and businessman, was first elected to the legislature in 1972 and was a house colleague of Hayden's for more than a decade. Wollrich, *Kansas Voter's Guide: 1974 General Election Edition*, 106, 107, 115; *1977–1978 Kansas Legislative Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Halgo Publishing, Inc., [1977]), 52, 87; *1981–1982 Kansas Legislative Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: Halgo Publishing, Inc., [1981]), 52, 58, 80, 86.

Hayden noted that he "never thought about the governorship until June of 1985, which would be less than eighteen months before I was elected governor. First off, most of us assumed that [Attorney General Robert T.] 'Bob' Stephen was going to become the Republican nominee. He was the attorney general, he was highly popular at that time." Stephen, depicted on the cover of this 1986 campaign pamphlet, served a record four terms as Kansas's attorney general, from 1979 until 1995.

Running for Governor

I never thought about the governorship until June of 1985, which would be less than eighteen months before I was elected governor. First off, most of us assumed that [Attorney General Robert T.] "Bob" Stephen was going to become the Republican nominee. He was the attorney general, he was highly popular at that time, but he hadn't been encumbered by scandals to that point. Particularly in my first term as speaker, I never thought anything about being governor. But then we got into the second term and particularly when Bob Stephan started running into problems, you know, it became more and more logical to think about it. And the fact too that [Governor] Carlin's [second] term was coming to an end and that [Lieutenant Governor] Tom Docking was the presumptive nominee, and he was so young at that time, you know, that kind of more and more conversation developed.[25]

I remember my first fundraiser. It was in August of 1985, we first started thinking about it and organizing. I had a brother—a terrible thing—who committed suicide the day before we were to have the very first fundraiser for governor. Well, of course, I immediately called and said, "I can't come to the fundraiser." Well Bill Bunten, and Jim Braden, [and Sue Peterson], and others who had helped organize it said, "We're going to go on with it. We're just going to go ahead with it, and we're going to tell people that you couldn't be here because of this terrible incident, you know, and they'll understand that." They did, and the fundraiser

25. In 1982, when Carlin ran for a second term, he decided to change running mates, and twenty-seven-year-old Tom Docking, political heir to the storied Docking legacy, replaced the incumbent lieutenant governor, Paul Dugan. Personal issues thwarted Bob Stephen's presumed designs on the governorship in 1986, but they did not entirely derail his political career and he retained a loyal Republican following. Stephen first won the attorney general's office in 1978 by upsetting the incumbent, Democrat Curt Schneider, by more than sixty thousand votes, and won reelection in 1982, 1986, and 1990, making him the longest-serving attorney general in state history. *State of Kansas, Election Statistics, 1978*, 73. See Beatty, "'Be Willing to Take Some Risks to Make Things Happen': A Conversation with Former Governor John W. Carlin," 114–40.

was very successful. That was in August [1985], so you can see that that was just one year before the primary, and that was really the first organized [event]. We took that money then from that fundraiser—I think we raised $20,000—and we hired some consultants: Dresner and Sikes, out of New York. They said, "Well, let's do a survey, we'll call this survey a road map; we'll find out whether you really ought to run for governor or not; we'll find out whether you really have any kind of chance; we'll test all these different attributes, things like that, and we'll find out if it makes any sense." And so they spent $20,000 essentially on a survey, which at that time was a hell of a lot of money! And they came to me and they said, "You know, this thing's winnable. Nobody knows you, but when they get to know you they're going to like you, because all the things we tested about you, they come out real high. So all we gotta do is introduce people to you." At that time Bob Stephen hadn't bowed out. His troubles were mounting but he was still a presumptive nominee, and I was getting ready for my last year as speaker, you see. And then all of a sudden Bob's campaign collapsed, and that then provided an opening for which we could take this road map and design a campaign that could win, even though nobody knew me.[26]

It wasn't something I dreamed of as a boy. It was something that I just worked up into. I was in the right place at the right time. A lot of politics is timing. If you'll visit with governors you will find that. I know they were prepared, but almost every one of them had an innate ability to take advantage of certain political circumstances that occurred at the time. I remember in March of 1986, which was the year I won the governorship, the *Wichita Eagle* did a poll and I think I had three percent of the vote or something like that. But I did it; I did it very methodically. I did it with a well-thought-out plan. And I did take advantage of the circumstances as they arose. So all of that ultimately led up to the successful campaign.

It was a very crowded Republican primary. In both primaries we ran in, there were seven Republican [candidates]. That actually, of course, is an advantage to a guy from a rural area in a small town. Larry Jones [from Wichita] was the president, CEO, of the Coleman Company—great guy, and a great Kansas company. Dick Peckham was a real good guy [from Andover]. I don't know if you want to call him a lay preacher. Dick was one of the very first evangelicals to ever emerge in modern Kansas politics. His whole campaign was really pro-life. *Roe v. Wade* passed in 1973, this is thirteen years later, [and] pro-life is just starting to get the momentum as a movement. It wasn't mature to the point where it influenced the elections, say, like it did in the '90s. He was kind of the vanguard of that in a sense. He wasn't an extremist; he was a real likable guy. He made a real nice presentation in a debate. He was always well dressed, he was articulate, never raised his voice, but his whole agenda was really the pro-life agenda. Jack [Brier] just didn't have the passion for it. Again a good guy; statewide, you know he'd been elected twice as secretary of state, was well known, well liked, but he didn't have the fire in the belly. Gene Bicknell, an entrepreneur [from Pittsburg], was worth millions of dollars.[27]

Well, I tell you, [for the primary] it was really a very simple strategy. My campaign manager, Bob Creighton designed it, and one of my major campaign advisors, Ed Flentje, who was from Wichita State University, reinforced it. They devised a plan and Bob said look, you're from a small town, a rural area, Vietnam veteran. He said there's ninety counties in Kansas with less than ten thousand people. He said if we carry every one of those, you're going to win. In the primary we carried eighty-nine of them. We appealed to people with a grass roots approach—a small town, agricultural base, a concern about and a closeness to the land; grass roots politics, if you will, really. We also combined that with somewhat of a populist refrain. And in a crowded primary, the other candidates were essentially competing for the urban vote. They were running other candidates from almost all of the urban centers or the eastern third of the state. So our goal was to run strong in the small counties and not get beat too bad in the urban counties. It was a very successful strategy because as the other candidates competed for urban votes we did everything we could to solidify the rural votes. And ultimately we won that primary against some very good candidates,

26. Hayden was a believer in using polls to help him in electoral contests and also in identifying citizen priorities on issues, and he commissioned public opinion surveys on citizen attitudes after taking office as governor and often shared the results with legislators. See "Polls help Hayden in governing," *Kansas City Times*, February 16, 1987.

27. Actually, there were "only" six contenders in the 1990 GOP primary, but there were indeed seven slates on the August 5, 1986, ballot. Hayden and Jack Walker, who captured nearly 100,000 votes (99,669; 36.1 percent), really had only one serious challenger, the team of Larry Jones and Bud Burke (85,989 votes; 31.1 percent). The rest came up far short: Brier/Priddle, 37,410 (13.55 percent); Bicknell/Yost, 25,733 (9.3 percent); Peckham/Vincent, 18,876 (6.8 percent); Pomeroy/Hale, 6,607 (2.4 percent); McDonald/Laidler, 1,842 (0.7 percent). Secretary of State, *Election Statistics, State of Kansas, 1986 Primary and General Elections* (Topeka: Secretary of State, [1987]); Hellebust, *Kansas Legislative Handbook, 1987*; "Republican candidates promise cures for the state's ills," *Overland Park Sun*, August 1, 1986.

The 1986 Republican primary was very crowded. Of the six other candidates Hayden faced, only one, Larry Jones of Wichita, was a real contender. Jones, pictured at left above, was a professor at Wichita State University from 1957 until 1964 and later the CEO of the Coleman Company. His running mate, Paul E. "Bud" Burke, above right, served in the Kansas Senate from 1975 until 1997 and was its majority leader from 1985 until 1988 and its president from 1989 until 1997.

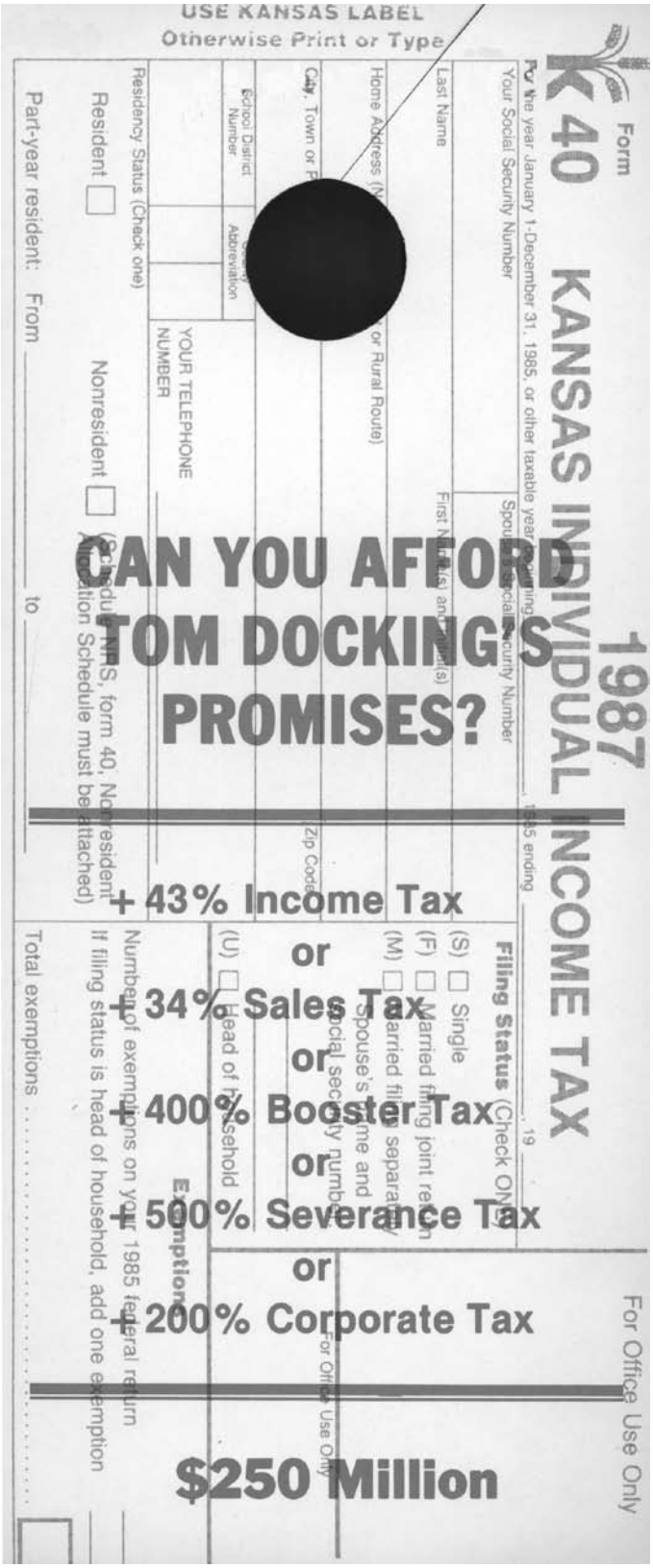
very quality candidates. And we did win it actually with a pretty darn good margin because the rural people really heard our message and really turned out.

[We got our message out through] the newspapers. In those days, by far the most politically powerful advertising media was the newspaper; and I'm not talking about the *Wichita Eagle*, I'm talking about small town weeklies. And one of the things that Bicknell did wrong is he bought every billboard in the state. He had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of Gene Bicknell billboards. Well, I asked my guys about that and they said, "Wait a minute. You're not selling cigarettes. If you were trying to sell Marlboros, it'd be the best place to put your money, but billboards are the poorest buy in politics. . . . So forget that." And then Larry Jones went out and he spent an enormous amount of money buying [newspaper advertisements]. Well, one of the secrets to political advertising is repetition. You can't buy a one-time ad and expect to have that. So Bob Creighton said, "What we gotta do is buy a $25 ad in every weekly paper in the state and we got to do that for fifteen weeks. And after the twelfth week, people will say, you know, I know this Mike Hayden, he must be a pretty good guy."

Actually, Bicknell was really on the rise about forty days before the election because he spent millions [editor's note: about one million] on advertising. At one time in the polls, I'd say he was up in the mid-twenties. What happened was this: Gene Bicknell, he's a nice guy, I still like him to this day. . . . [But] what he had done, he had financed an X-rated movie. And he and Jones were going head-to-head as pro-business candidates, so they were fighting for the same votes [and] they kind of ignored us. They were fighting for Johnson County votes and Sedgwick County votes, and so [Paul E.] "Bud" Burke—who was a state senator at that time and Larry Jones's running mate—he found out that Gene Bicknell had financed this X-rated movie. He not only had paid for it, but had a cameo appearance in it! And so [Burke] leaked that to the press. The press corps started clamoring, "Well, where's the movie, we want to see it. What's the name of it, who's got a copy?" And, of course, then the headlines were "Bicknell makes X-rated movie." And in the polls he went from 23 to 10 [percent] in a matter of two weeks. What was the name of that movie? Never saw it. I didn't need to watch it; the damage had already been done. But he played the gardener.[28]

28. In the annals of Kansas politics, the derailment of Gene Bicknell's 1986 campaign by his appearance in a "soft-porn" film ranks as one of the strangest. The movie to which Hayden refers, and in which Bicknell did in fact act, *They're Playing with Fire*, was released in 1984. The film was

In the 1986 general election Hayden ran against Lieutenant Governor Tom Docking, the grandson of two-term Kansas Governor George Docking (1959–1961) and son of four-term Governor Robert Docking (1967–1975). Hayden recalled that "Tom and I were not adversaries in the traditional sense. We actually admired each other personally. Our whole campaign was really about, not a dogfight, but a horse race; two people who really cared a lot about our state and had a rich heritage in our state." One issue the two disagreed on, as reflected in this Hayden campaign door tag, was taxes.



I remember what Dick Dresner said to me, he said, "Every time you open your mouth, tell 'em you're a Republican, tell 'em you're from a farm family, tell 'em you're from a small town, and tell 'em you're a Vietnam veteran." He said, "Don't tell 'em anything else. Just say that; that's all you need to say." And it was true. And in those ninety counties, that was the message that worked.

The way it worked was that several people had approached me about running as lieutenant governor. I remember a state senator from Pittsburg; he wanted to run as lieutenant governor. Several other people kinda sent messages. I remember sitting in my office one day and [state Senator] Jack Walker asking for an appointment, and he came in and said, "If you are going to run, I'd be interested in talking to you about lieutenant governor." One thing you got to remember about senators is they don't have anything to lose. It's in mid-term and they're still going to be in the senate, even if they're not successful in a statewide office. But Jack came in and said, "We've known each other, I like you. . . . You need help in Johnson County, need help in the urban areas because you're from a small town, and I'd be interested . . . if you haven't got somebody already." And

not X-rated, but had been given an R rating. Still, Hayden's memory of it being "X-rated" can be excused because what gave the film notoriety was its rambunctiously over-the-top nude sex scenes featuring lead actress Sybil Danning, who had achieved some fame by the mid-1980s with her scantily-clad performances in films such as *Chained Heat* (1983) and later *Reform School Girls* (1986). Hayden's memory of Bicknell's role is spot on: Bicknell plays "George the Gardener" in a not insignificant role and finds himself gruesomely murdered in the end by a homicidal maniac. Further confusing matters for Bicknell in the campaign was the existence of an X-rated movie with a similar title, which he had to deny being involved with. Needless to say, the fact that he had been in a movie with the "energetic" Sybil Danning made his protestations less credible, even if true. The movie became something of a cult classic among fans of the genre, and in 2007 Starz Home Entertainment released *They're Playing with Fire* on DVD. For more see http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088255/. See also, "Spending in governor's race in Kansas reaches $2.9 million," *Kansas City Times*, July 31, 1986; "Hayden rallies to win nomination," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, August 6, 1986; "Heavy rural vote beats challenge from Jones," *Overland Park Sun*, August 6, 1986.

that was, like, maybe at the end of the [1985] legislative session. That was before really, honestly, even before I had really even decided to run for governor.

Walker was a state senator, and I was in the house, so there's a balance. He was from Johnson County and I was from the far west, so you got the geographic balance. He was an MD [medical doctor]; he was a former mayor of Overland Park. I was much more conservative and he was much more moderate. So you got this geographic balance, you got this house and senate balance, and you have this philosophical balance. And actually, Jack did not prove to be that strong a campaigner, but the press loved him. I mean the *Wichita Eagle* just thought it was the greatest choice you could have made. And of course in Johnson County, how could he not be well received? Former mayor of Overland Park, former chairman of the Department of Family Practice at KU Med Center, and a state senator. So, who could say anything bad about Jack? So, as far as the media was concerned, they thought it was a very good choice.[29]

In the general election, I ran against Tom Docking. And the truth is that Tom Docking is a good friend. Tom and I were not adversaries in the traditional sense. We actually admired each other personally. Our whole campaign was really about, not a dogfight, but a horse race; two people who really cared a lot about our state and had a rich heritage in our state. I felt all along that Tom Docking could be the toughest race—because his grandfather had been governor twice, his dad had been governor four times, he was the lieutenant governor. He had a name that Republicans were used to voting for. So I always viewed that as the toughest challenge. One of the things that happens is that if you win the primary, especially if it's contested, or highly contested, you would be amazed at the credibility you gain, particularly among independents, unaffiliated voters; all of a sudden, you know, you're really a credible candidate. In fact, in all honesty, once we won the primary, we never trailed Tom Docking in the polls. We never did, because, first off, he had no [primary] opposition. So he didn't have to spend money advertising, he didn't have to make a lot of appearances; he could save his resources but that meant nobody was hearing about him. So we're out there every day, generating news, getting our name out there in front of people, going to this debate, going to this town hall meeting, working the small towns, bus tours all across western Kansas. Well, you're gaining all this voter ID, which Tom didn't do because he didn't have any opposition. He thought, well, I'll save all my smoke for the general election. Well by that time we had enough momentum and after you beat the likes of Larry Jones and Gene Bicknell and Jack Brier, all of a sudden you become damn credible. People started saying, "this guy can win."

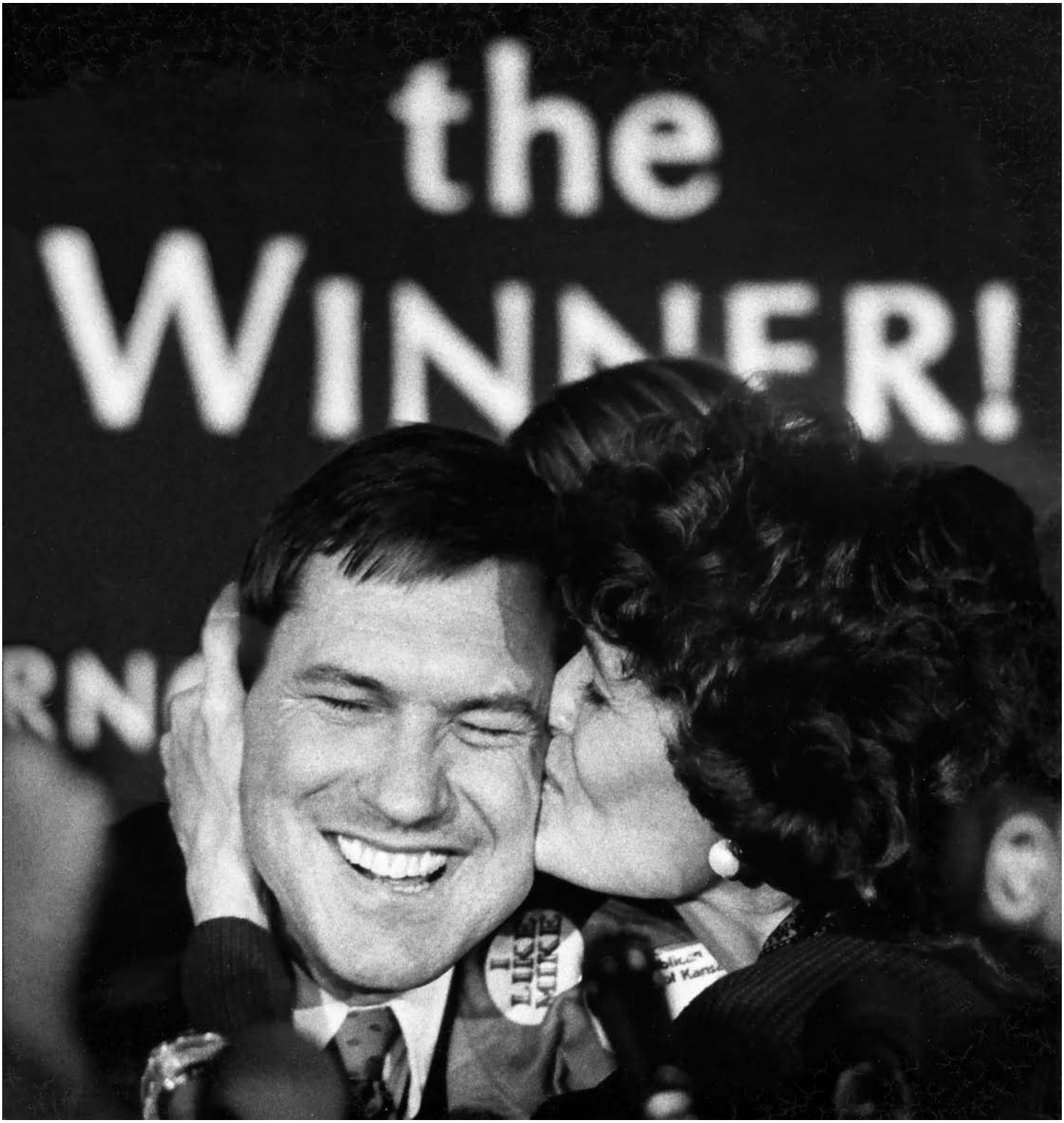
I always regarded that Tom Docking would be the toughest race, but what happened was that that primary was such a launching pad that after we won it, and about two weeks after, we ran a poll and it showed us with a six or seven point lead, and it showed that Tom Docking hadn't moved in the polls at all since spring. And so what we had to do then essentially was protect the lead. And so then what we did was we consolidated the [Republican] base. We went to Gene Bicknell, got his support and his supporters. We went to Larry Jones, got his support. We went to Bud Burke, who was Larry Jones's running mate, got his supporters. Went to Harland E. Priddle, Jack Brier's running mate, got his supporters. Even went down the list to Richard Peckham's [supporters]. . . . Republicans gotta cross over if the Democrat's gonna win, so if you consolidate the Republican base then you've done a lot.[30]

Then the other thing that we focused on, that we had for the advantage is, here I was [a forty-two-year-old] speaker of the house, and Tom Docking was thirty-two years old. So, you could just continue to hammer away on this experience question. I still remember the ad that [McDill] "Huck" Boyd had with the watermelon, and it said "Docking" on it, and the old farmer is thumping it, and he's saying, "You know, Mom, I don't think it's ripe yet." And that was almost the essence of the campaign.

The one time when Tom Docking started to make inroads on us was when he alleged that I was in favor of an embargo. It was actually the most effective ad he ever had. And of course I wasn't smart enough in those days to react immediately. We let the ad run for two or three weeks, which wasn't uncommon in those days. That was

29. Born on April 5, 1922, Jack D. Walker was a 1953 graduate of the University of Kansas School of Medicine and former professor at the Kansas City, Kansas, Medical Center. He was in the middle of his first four-year term in the state senate when he signed on as Hayden's running mate in the successful 1986 campaign. Hellebust, *Kansas Legislative Handbook, 1987*.

30. Edward Flentje, one of Hayden's campaign advisors, noted his candidate's advantages going into the Docking race: "First, he had developed a rural political base in the primary, and second, Republicans held a 140,000 voter registration margin over Democrats. . . . Hayden's campaign polling after the primary showed he was holding 70–75 percent of Republicans voters, attracting 35–55 percent of independent voters, and drawing 15–30 percent of Democratic voters. Whatever the exact makeup of party voting on election day, party affiliation helped Hayden upset the Docking legacy." Flentje, *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden*, 5.



Of winning the governorship in 1986, Hayden, pictured here with his wife Patti, recalled, "it wasn't something I dreamed of as a boy. It was something that I just worked up into. I was in the right place at the right time." Image courtesy of Mike Hayden.

a very effective ad and what precipitated that was we had a debate up in Manhattan on agriculture. A guy asked me, "Do you think we ought to embargo South Africa?" That's when they still had apartheid. He didn't even use the word embargo, he just said, "Do you think we ought to sell our wheat to South Africa as long as they maintain apartheid?" And I said, well you know, "I think apartheid is deplorable, and we have a lot of customers for our wheat all the way around the world, and I think we ought to consider refusing to sell to them until they change their policy." And then that's when Tom made the ad, "Hayden favors embargo," which was a very smooth move on his part. It was a hell of a good idea, and an effective ad.[31] The problem with Tom was, I don't think his pollsters were that great. He had the thing running and he ran it for two or three weeks and then he pulled it. Well, it takes a while to catch fire, and he should have just kept it up, even though it was the same ad and everybody had already seen it. Every time somebody saw it they got mad, and so the best thing that ever happened to us was he pulled it.

We had one [television] debate, and that's when I knew we'd won the election. It was in Salina, at the Bicentennial Center, and it was about a week before the election. We were ahead in the polls anyway, but I knew after that [debate] was over, that we'd won. Because it came across as Tom was just really too young and immature, too inexperienced, in answering the questions about the details of government, it's operation, and stuff like that. His answers were shallow, and I could follow up and say, now here's how much money we really did put behind that; here's why we didn't pass that particular bill or law, you know, or here's why we're doing this; and Tom just had a cursory knowledge. So when it was over, I knew we'd won.[32]

Mike Hayden ran over fifteen television ads in the 1986 primary and general election campaigns, several of which he wrote himself. With regard to one that featured Hayden fishing in a rowboat with his two young daughters, he recalled:

That ad is quite a story, it's quite a story. The whole idea was to show family values, but it was also to show a concern about the environment. And this sounds crazy, but it's true: often in those days people mistook [then Democratic Congressman] Jim Slattery and I. So we make this ad and we start running it in Topeka, and people start calling Slattery's office. And they start saying, what the hell is Jim doing in a boat with two girls with no life jacket on? That's the truth! They're calling Slattery's office and he's calling over to us, saying what are they talking about? I designed that ad because I thought the themes were right, but because I didn't have a life jacket on, that's the thing they could focus on, and another was, they thought it was Jim Slattery. After a while we pulled the ad because it wasn't effective, it was misinterpreted.

With regard to another ad that he designed and had to pull in one specific city, Hayden explained:

There was a terrible automobile accident in Topeka, and it was out in the southeast part of town, and it was caused by a drunk driver and he hit a family and killed several people, including some of the kids. So I made this ad about drunk driving, and the thing is I went right out there to the corner where the accident occurred. And in the ad you can see the intersection sign behind me. And I'm talking about how we need to toughen up on drunk driving. I was crusading to get the standards lowered so we could apprehend these drunk drivers. Well, we make this ad, and it's a very effective ad. And we're running it statewide, and I was actually in the speaker's office and the phone rang. Well, it was this fella whose family had been in the accident. He said this is just crushing our family every time we see that ad. They get all these nightmares, and they go down to the cemetery and everything else. He said, it's just killing us. I said okay, I'll tell you what I'll do: we'll pull the ad in Topeka. I won't pull it statewide but I will pull it in Topeka so your family doesn't have to watch it anymore. Because I certainly empathize with what you're saying and I certainly apologize, we meant no offence. What made it so powerful was that was the actual scene of the accident. But that's what happens, you have these unintended consequences.

Governing Kansas

Every governor does have a different style, and I've been fortunate to know many governors over the years, and actually many presidents. Everyone does approach it in a different way and the real truth is there is no one way. Everybody brings their personality to the office. So I brought a personality, a strong personality in that I had been a company commander in Vietnam, I had been speaker of the house, a chairman of the Ways and Means Committee—the kind of

31. The ad opens with the sound of a thresher and the face of a grizzled Kansas farmer. After a narrator describes the toughness of the Kansas farmer, Docking appears from the corn stalks and angrily denounces the idea of an embargo weakening the ability of the Kansas farmer to make a living.

32. The final vote tally was: Hayden, 436,267; Docking, 404,338. *State of Kansas, Election Statistics, 1986*; Socolofsky, *Kansas Governors*, 19; "Late surge wins for Hayden," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, November 5, 1986.

"Every governor does have a different style," Hayden recalled, "everybody brings their personality to the office." Hayden is pictured here at his inauguration with others who served or would serve in the office, including outgoing Governor John Carlin, seated nearest Hayden, and Bill Graves, seated far left, who was then secretary of state. Between the two is Jack Walker, Hayden's lieutenant governor during his single term. Image courtesy of Mike Hayden.

positions where you have to have a very strong personality. And so I brought that kind of no nonsense approach to it, an all-business type—[U.S. Senator] Pat Roberts used to say about Mike Hayden, he used to say, "Two forward and one back, feed them hot chow." That's kind of my style; no nonsense, straightforward, "here's what we've got to do, let's get the job done." And that has its pluses and its minuses, of course. You know, I don't have any regrets about that style at all, I mean, it was my personality. Ultimately we got the highway plan passed and some of those things; it was ultimately the style that sometimes was needed.

I mean you gotta be yourself, you gotta be yourself. People suggested that to me, well, why don't you go to voice school? I said, "Hey, I am what I am and we're gonna deal with what we got." And voters are either going to accept that or they're going to reject it. Let's don't try to be something we aren't. Because that's one of the things that got me to be speaker of the house and actually elected governor was being genuine. I mean there were no airs about me, you know. In fact, one of the great quotes [about me was said by] Irving Niles, he was an old Democrat from Osage County. He was in the house, and one of his great quotes was, he said, "Speaker Hayden's voice has been known to sterilize cocklebur seeds to a depth of three inches in dry soil."[33]

33. Hayden has a distinctive accent. Flentje described it this way: "His natural voice resonated a genuine Western Kansas twang, which he moderated in his public addresses, but which came through vividly when he spoke off the cuff, particularly under pressure or on the defensive. On such occasions, his voice would rise in decibels and pitch and achieve a

But I recognize very much Governor Graves's entirely different style, which was very successful for him, and Governor Sebelius's style, which I think has been greatly successful for her. Their styles match their personalities, and that's really what it's all about. The secret is: to govern you've got to be yourself. Whatever you brought to the table, those tools, that's what you want to use, that's what's going to be most successful for you.[34]

[Being governor was] a very humbling experience. I mean, to think about the fact that you're from a small town, you grew up in a farm family, you're from 320 miles west of Topeka, and all of sudden you've been elected to take the mantle of leadership for our state. It's an overwhelming feeling, a very humbling feeling to think that enough people have trusted you to make you the chief executive and that you've got four years at least, perhaps longer, to govern this state, which is an awesome responsibility.

I felt very good about it because having been speaker of the house, having spent many years in the legislature, having known many governors and worked with several, I felt like I was prepared for the job. In that sense, I felt confident that I was ready to assume the job. But at the same time, the responsibility of it, it is awesome if you think about all of the responsibilities of state government and the fact that, you know, the buck does stop at your desk. Ultimately, with all the issues that can't be solved somewhere else, they are going to bring those to your desk and you have to make a judgment. It's exciting, but it's a very awesome responsibility.

There were no real big surprises. Probably the thing that kind of makes you the humblest, and in a sense is both frustrating and rewarding, is that unlike the other positions in state government, there is a significant amount of ceremony associated with the governor's office. People want you to be in their page pictures, they want you to ride in their hometown parade, they want you to be at their centennial or their celebration or their Fourth of July.

One of the hardest parts for me was trying to hit that fine line between spending time on public policy, on real questions, and the ceremony, because the demand for the governor's appearances are just absolutely overwhelming. I would tell you that Governor Graves was very skillful at dealing with that part. I think Governor Sebelius is very skillful at that, far better than I was, in the sense that I was not the best manager of time. I would let the schedule overwhelm me. In fact, I remember one time one of my assistants asked me something and I pulled out a three-by-five card and I said, "What does the schedule say?" And she said, "You mean you're going to let your life be ruled by three-by-five cards?" And there is something to that! So one of the great skills of being a successful governor is to determine the priorities and stick with them, and not let the overwhelming demand for your time and appearances, particularly related to ceremony, get in the way of a successful governorship.

The first thing I did to set the tone but also out of necessity—it was so tough when I came in, the [financial] reserve was so low—that I ordered a midyear rescission. It's remarkable, but I introduced a bill on Monday, the first day of the legislature, to cut the budget in the current year 3.2 percent, essentially across the board. The year's half gone, so that's really a 6 percent cut. By Friday evening the house and senate had both passed it. I mean, we had to do it in order to balance the budget. So that set the tone as far as conservatism, you know. It's pretty hard to argue against conservative credentials when you come in, the first thing you do is you cut the budget in midyear. Now of course, I didn't want to do it, but the real truth is we had to keep the government operating, we had to keep the balance and that was the best way to achieve it. And we did achieve it. So, I didn't have to fight a lot for conservative credentials when it came to fiscal matters, after you do something like that. We had to order a midyear rescission, Johnny on the spot, which really put administrators in a bind, you know. That was one of the very toughest things I had to do.[35]

Death Penalty

In the case of the death penalty, at that time, you're talking about 70 percent of the people of Kansas saying they favor it versus 30 percent saying they don't. It was a prominent issue because everywhere you went the press asked about it. We knew it was a prominent enough issue that we made some [campaign] ads concerning it, but the real truth is, I don't think it influenced the outcome of the election.

Haydenesque quality for which he was well recognized across the state." Flentje, *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden*, 9. An audio recording of the 2008 Hayden interview is available at www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2009spring.htm.

34. For self-descriptions of Graves's and Sebelius's gubernatorial styles, see *The Kansas Governor: A Behind the Curtain Look at the Chief Political Figure in the State*, DVD (Topeka: Washburn University and the Center for Kansas Studies, 2005).

35. A rescission is an across-the-board cut of government spending. See "Hayden orders 3.8 percent budget cut," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, November 20, 1986; "Hayden to take helm with state sailing through financial straits," *Kansas City Times*, January 10, 1987; "Hayden proud of state's financial turnaround," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, December 21, 1987.

"Probably the thing that kind of makes you the humblest, and in a sense is both frustrating and rewarding," Hayden recollected, "is that unlike the other positions in state government, there is a significant amount of ceremony associated with the governor's office." Here Hayden helps a group of children hang a yellow ribbon at Cedar Crest, the governor's mansion, in 1990 to demonstrate support for Kansas National Guard troops who had been deployed to the Persian Gulf for Operation Desert Storm. Image courtesy of Mike Hayden.

Now, why the legislature didn't approve it then, and then ironically did approve it when Governor Joan Finney was in office, who opposed it, or who was reluctant about it. Probably the most single-handed person to prevent its passage [during Hayden's administration] was Dick Bond. When Jack Walker became lieutenant governor, Dick Bond was appointed to take his place, and he ultimately became president of the senate. Dick was very anti-death penalty, and he kind of made it his crusade in the senate to keep it from getting twenty-one votes, because it was going to pass the house overwhelmingly. So it all came down to the senate. Both Bud Burke and Bob Talkington, senate presidents [during Hayden's term], actually favored the death penalty, but they weren't passionate about it. They were going to vote yes, but they weren't going to knock down the door to make sure it passed. And the Democrats, there weren't too many of them, but they could say, well, we're voting against the governor, so we'll vote no. So the senate was able to put together coalitions that kept it from getting twenty-one votes. And then ironically, of course, [they] passed it after Governor Finney came in. And she let it become law without her signature.[36]

The Highway Plan

One of the most illustrative examples of how a bill becomes law is our attempt and ultimate success at getting a comprehensive highway plan passed. When I came into office I had as speaker of the house headed up a commission on the public agenda, and one of the issues that was identified as sorely needed was improvement in the infrastructure of Kansas, particularly our highways. We have the third largest highway system in America. Only Texas and California have more road miles than we do that belong to the state. Yet our highways at that time were in substantial disrepair. I came to the office with the idea of a major comprehensive highway plan, but in the first session I didn't introduce that idea because we were having

36. See "Death penalty Hayden's No. 1 disappointment," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, December 22, 1987; "Governor pushes death penalty," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, January 17, 1989.

In the spring of 1989 the legislature passed a highway plan Hayden had worked hard at promoting. The governor and other Kansas officials—including Secretary of the Kansas Department of Transportation Horace B. Edwards, pictured here shaking hands with Hayden—traveled to Fredonia to sign the comprehensive highway plan into law. "Many years before," Hayden noted, "I had traveled [to Fredonia] to talk about the need for a new highway in southeastern Kansas. Today that highway exists and it is U.S. 400. And it has changed people's lives forever in southeastern Kansas." Image courtesy of Mike Hayden.

financial problems as a state, we were in the recession of the 1980s; we were also in the drought.

So what I did was I studied and had a lot of background work done on the need for a comprehensive highway plan, and in September of 1987 called a special session of the legislature. It was in my first year in office. I put a bill before them to initiate a comprehensive highway plan. Well, the legislature refused to adopt it. They went home without having done anything during the special session. But I never gave up on the idea, never quit on it. Ultimately, after the 1988 session, and then in the 1989 session, the plan really started to catch fire and people could see the economic advantages of it, people could see the public safety aspects of it.[37]

You have to employ every technique that is available. You have to have town meetings. I remember the first town meeting we had in Salina, which was held at the airport. I think there were nine people at that meeting. And one of them was my Aunt Mary. So you see we had to start with the idea and then we had to spread that idea through the media, through town meetings, through public appearances, through individual dialogue with legislators, through significant work at the [U.S.] Department of Transportation with the secretary, with the employees, with their public relations people. So you have to employ all those techniques to be successful at a comprehensive piece of legislation like that.

37. See "Hayden Devising Programs," *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, December 29, 1986; "Panel adopts $1.8 billion highway plan," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, June 5, 1987; "Hayden makes highway pitch to Legislature," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, September 1, 1987.

People needed jobs desperately across the state. And in the spring of 1989, we did pass an eight billion dollar comprehensive highway plan. And that plan, I'm proud to say, came in on time and under budget when it was all said and done, even though by then I had left office many years before. It embodies the notion that you can have an idea and, even though the road ahead was difficult, if you stay with it, you ultimately can sign that notion into law. I did that in Fredonia, Kansas, signed the comprehensive highway plan into law in Fredonia, because it was in Fredonia, that many years before, I had traveled to talk about the need for a new highway in southeastern Kansas. Today that highway exists and it is U.S. 400. And it has changed people's lives forever in southeastern Kansas.[38]

"Tell the Governor"

It was kind of a unique experience. We felt like it was important to break down the barriers. You know, most Kansans really never get to see the governor or if they do, it's just to shake their hand or see them on television, or maybe see him in passing. They never really get the chance to go one-on-one with the governor, particularly people away from Topeka, people away from the capitol. So we had a program called "Tell the Governor." We took it to Garden City, we took it to western Kansas, we took it to southeastern Kansas, and we simply opened the door and said, "You've got five minutes with the governor." And people would line up, and they would wait their turn. They would be very, very courteous and thankful. What most people brought you were their personal problems. They were people who couldn't get their child support payment, or they were people who had handicaps or disabilities and didn't feel that they were being treated right or that they were being discriminated against. There were people that would bring ideas, inventors, different people like that. Some of those ideas, as you might imagine, are as strange as you could imagine. But other people had very articulate policy concerns that they would bring and say, "As governor you ought to think about this, you ought to see if there is a solution to this."

But what I remember most about it was, first, it keeps you in touch. It keeps you in touch with reality. When you're governor you have security forces around you, you have a lot of secretaries, and you have other people, so that the general public just doesn't walk in the door unannounced or without an appointment. "Tell the Governor" gave people a chance to just show up and tell their two-cents worth to the governor. So it was a lot of value to me because it kept me in check with reality, with what people are really thinking and saying in many cases. But it also let people know that we had an open-door policy, and it was their government and they should have access to it.[39]

Property Tax Reappraisal

What happened on the property tax system was that it all was precipitated on a lawsuit that the railroads filed. They claimed that their property taxes were unfair and the system was a violation of the constitution, because it valued railroad property differently and at a higher rate. And they had darn good lawyers. Well, they won that suit. So, the court said this is unconstitutional. What you're doing now, you're going to have to do something else. If you just kept it the same, just gave the railroads a break, and kept everything else the same, all that property tax burden was going to shift to homeowners. So we had to have some way to protect homeowners from that huge shift. The only way to do that was what we call *classification*. It used to be under the constitution, [and] it said all property tax shall be assessed uniform and equally, that was the key phrase. And that's what the court ruled was not the case in the case of the railroads. But if you're going to go with uniform and equal and you're going to reduce the taxes on the railroads, you're going to raise it on everybody else. So, other states had a system called classification, in which they classified different classes of property and taxed them at different rates. That's one way out of this huge shift. The court didn't say you couldn't classify and couldn't tax at different rates if you changed the constitution. So the question was submitted to the people, then: "Do you want to change the constitution to move away from a system of uniform and equal to a system of classification?" And the people said yes. And they approved it.[40]

38. "Southeast Kansans applaud road plan," *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, May 18, 1989; Flentje, *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden*, 55–84.

39. Hayden's first "Tell the Governor" program was held on February 16, 1987, in the governor's statehouse office. The program ran from 10:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. and visitors had five minutes to speak with Hayden. Hayden also had special "Tell the Governor" programs that were open to state employees only.

40. As Hayden pointed out, the new property classification amendment was proposed and ratified near the end of the Carlin administration. It was one of five "Questions" (constitutional amendments) on the November 1986 general election ballot. "Question No. 3—pertaining to classification; divide real and personal property"—was easily ratified, the vote being 534,799 for and 253,123 against. *Election Statistics, 1986*, 114; Beatty, "'Be Willing to Take Some Risks to Make Things Happen': A Conversation with Former Governor John W. Carlin," 131.

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Tax protesters storm Hayden's office

'Drag out' governor, crowd yells

By MARTIN HAWVER
Capital-Journal staff writer

Scores of property tax protesters stormed the governor's outer office Wednesday at the conclusion of an occasionally rowdy rally on the Statehouse steps.

The rally, organized by the Kansas Association of Realtors through its "Citizens for Fair Taxation," featured what by now have become nearly standard complaints of individually higher tax bills, tax shifts due to classification of property and inability or unwillingness to pay higher property taxes.

Karen France, lobbyist for the Realtors, estimated that about 2,000 people attended the noon-hour rally on the sunny south steps of the Statehouse. Others put the number nearer 1,000.

KAR had distributed leaflets throughout most of the state, with fliers in several major newspapers to drum up a crowd for the rally.

Several speakers urged changes in property taxes, or a rollback to 1988 property tax levels, and most at the rally appeared to be signing petitions urging the governor to call a special session of the Legislature to deal with the tax increases.

It was at the rally's end, when KAR executive director Jim Mayer led the crowd in singing "God Bless America" to end the rally that several people grabbed the still-alive microphone and shouted, "Bring the governor out, pull him out."

Gov. Mike Hayden was, indoors, working on state budgets during the

Among more than 1,200 tax increase protesters who rallied on the Statehouse steps Wednesday were, left to right, Audrey Hoffiney, Mickey Kanan and Jim Lorance, all of Kansas City, Kan., and Margaret Young, Wyandotte County.

—Staff/Thad Allton

Governor meets group after rally

By MARTIN HAWVER
Capital-Journal staff writer

Gov. Mike Hayden met Wednesday afternoon with two groups of property tax protesters, but they apparently extracted only one promise from him, they said.

Four men from Pottawatomie County said they met with the governor and he agreed to have the Department of Revenue simplify the forms on which property tax protests are filed.

The delegation from Pottawatomie County carried to the governor a resolution passed by their county commission proposing simplified forms for the protest.

"We knew if we went in asking for the moon we wouldn't get anywhere," Wayne Martin of Olsburg said. "But this is something simple that can be done cheaply and will enable people to protest their taxes.

"It doesn't solve the problem, but the current forms for filing a property tax protest are so daunting that a lot of people who should be filing aren't."

The other group that met privately with Hayden in the conference room of the State Budget Division, where the governor was holed up most of the day and during a taxpayer rally at noon, consisted mostly of business people.

For a time Wednesday afternoon, it appeared that Hayden would have to sit down with the executive director and lobbyist of the Kansas Association of Realtors.

When Hayden sent the message to the property tax protesters at noon

Tax code changes that had been voted in during Governor Carlin's administration, coupled with a three-year property tax reassessment in the late 1980s, led to steep increases in the tax evaluation of some Kansans in 1989. Hayden remembered that commercial property owners especially "just absolutely went berserk when they got [their tax] statements. . . . they 'rioted' on the statehouse steps." Newspaper coverage of the events, such as that offered here by the Topeka Capital-Journal, *November 30, 1989, captured the protest during which some citizens were heard shouting for Hayden's impeachment.*

In addition to that the court essentially ordered that all the property in the state be reappraised, because many reappraisals were twenty years old. So you've got these two things working in tandem; you're going to change the system of taxation from uniform and equal to one of class, classifications that you're going to tax. You're going to put in the constitution the rates, but you're going to tax different classes differently. And at the same time you're going to take these twenty-year-old reappraisals and you're to force every county in the state to hire professional appraisers and go out and appraise every single piece of property.

[The new system was authorized by] a constitutional amendment in 1986. So then we started about the task of reappraising all the property in the state. Well that took three years; all of '87, all of '88, and people didn't get their new tax statement, their new value statement, until [November] 1989, that's when the new system came out [less than a year before the next gubernatorial election]. What happened was it truly did protect farmers and homeowners. It truly did. But even so, many people's house hadn't been appraised for twenty years so when the appraiser came out and reappraised it, the value of it went up 40 percent or 50 percent, because the old value wasn't a true value, of course. It was twenty years out of date. But where it really fell, where people were terribly under appraised, was commercial property. I mean it was

scandalous how low most commercial property in the state was appraised.

And, of course [they blamed me]. I was governor, see. We had a "riot" on the south steps of the statehouse; all either real estate agents or small businesses. One of the things we did to help small business, but it also raised taxes on some of these other groups, is we eliminated the inventory tax; that was part of this question to the people. Because in the old days, you paid property taxes on your inventory. If you were a drugstore, every December you had to take inventory. And you had to pay property taxes based on that inventory. Well, we eliminated the inventory tax but what that did, of course, was that just shifted the tax burden on everybody else. So you had this huge [shift]. Farmers and homeowners were protected. The farmers weren't complaining at all. They knew how damn good they had it. They still have it to this day. And the truth is that most homeowners weren't very upset, because their assessed values went up, [but] the mill levies went down correspondingly, so in the end [with] their taxes there was very little difference.

But the big deal was the real estate and commercial property people. They just absolutely went berserk when they got these statements. And like I said, they "rioted" on the statehouse steps. They demanded all kinds of things from the legislature and from me, and the real truth is there was very little or nothing we could do because it was a constitutional amendment and it was approved by the people. They themselves had approved it, and it's in the constitution, it's not like a statute you can just run out and change. So there was a special session [in December] and we voted to do two or three things to help taxpayers. Things like instead of owing all your taxes on December 15, we'll delay that until April 15, so you got four more months to figure out how you're going to pay or save your money to pay, you know those kinds of things. So we did pass four or five minor pieces of legislation to help the transition. But that's what the whole thing was about.[41]

I was sensitive to the power of the reappraisal issue because my father had been a county commissioner out in western Kansas when we reappraised in the 1960s [an initiative of the Avery administration].[42] As a result of that he got defeated when the new tax system was put in place. You know, when you talk about taxes, the only fair taxes, of course, are the ones the other guy pays. And in reappraisal one of two things can happen: your taxes either go up or they go down. If they went down, well, you had it coming, and if they went up, you were mad about that. And of course the easiest person to be mad at is the governor.

So, I knew that reappraisal would be a very, very difficult issue, and so it happened.

I would say the good thing about reappraisal is that no governor will have to go through it again, because when we changed the system, now there is a reappraisal annually of one third of property, so every three years people's taxes are adjusted based on current valuation. That is a very fair system and is not going to cause governors in the future to have to go through what we had to go through in 1990. But I was not at all surprised by it.

It's one of those things that you do what you know is right, and sometimes you suffer the political consequences of that. We were very fortunate to win a primary in that year against several worthy opponents who campaigned on the property tax question. But they had inflicted so much damage in that primary that the Republican Party was deeply split. Governor Finney, who I had known for years as state treasurer, she used to be a Republican and then she changed to become a Democrat. She was not involved in the reappraisal question as state treasurer, as I was, as Governor Carlin had been, who was my predecessor, who actually ran in that primary against her, and probably was defeated in that primary principally because of the reappraisal issue.[43]

So we were in a situation where Governor Finney [Hayden's general election opponent] could say, "It's not my fault, I didn't have anything to do with it." And I was

41. The "riot" to which Hayden refers was a rally organized by the Kansas Association of Realtors held on the south steps of the statehouse at 11:45 a.m. on November 29, 1989. The *Topeka Capital-Journal* estimated attendance at between one and two thousand people and at times the protest grew heated, as chants of "impeach Hayden" and "drag him out" were heard from the crowd and some protesters "stormed" the governor's office demanding a meeting. Governor Hayden did not make an appearance at the rally, but did meet with two small groups of protesters afterwards. The intensity of the protests was also felt at an earlier November 22 meeting sponsored by Kansas realtors at which one attendee proposed a total tax boycott and argued that "government doesn't have the right to tax people out of their homes and businesses, and I will come to your house with my rifle to protect your property from being stolen by the government." See "Special session urged at rally," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, November 22, 1989; "Hayden moves back tax deadline," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, November 23, 1989; "Tax protesters storm Hayden's office," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, November 30, 1989; "Session ends with no tax bill. Payment delay only relief voted," *Sunday Capital-Journal*, December 10, 1989; Flentje, *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden*, 159–60.

42. For more on the politics of taxation in the 1960s, see Beatty, "'You Have to Like People': A Conversation with Former Governor William H. Avery," 60–65.

43. Fred Phelps, Sr., also a candidate in the 1990 Democratic primary against Finney and Carlin, distanced himself from the tax code changes by proposing that a lawsuit be brought against the state legislature, which he believed to be guilty of fraud. See "Special session urged at rally," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, November 22, 1989.

in a position where it occurred on my watch. I knew it was the right thing to do but I also knew that politically it was probably the kiss of death, and ultimately proved to be so as far as that election goes. But you know, I wouldn't have done it any differently. We did do the right thing from a policy standpoint. The truth is, it was such an overwhelming issue we probably couldn't have turned it around no matter what we had done.

I certainly could have attempted to [overturn the new system], but I thought that would be a terrible tragedy. It was not the right thing to do. I discussed it with the speaker of the house, with the president of the senate, both of whom had been former chairmen of the Tax Committee. And they were experts on reappraisal, and they knew we did the right thing. I did too. Legislators who had studied it for years knew that we did the right thing even though it was difficult politically. We knew that we were instituting a system that was far fairer when it came to property taxes. We just simply stood our ground, and we tried to get people to understand that in the long run, they'd be far better off if we had a fairer tax system. And we do have one today. All the studies since have, in fact, verified that fact. Kansas State has studied the impact of reappraisal since 1990 and every time it comes out to show that, in fact, reappraisals are by far fairer than the old system we were under.

So, you know, you have to make the choice and we made the choice, and I don't regret it at all. We did the right thing. It is just one of the consequences of politics. I've always said this about politics: "If you're afraid to lose, you should never run." So I was lucky to win and fortunate to win the first nine elections I ran in. But I was never afraid to lose, and I wasn't afraid to lose in 1990. In fact, I thought there was a very high probability all along we would not be successful in that campaign. But I don't regret it at all, and I am actually proud of the policy that came out of it.[44]

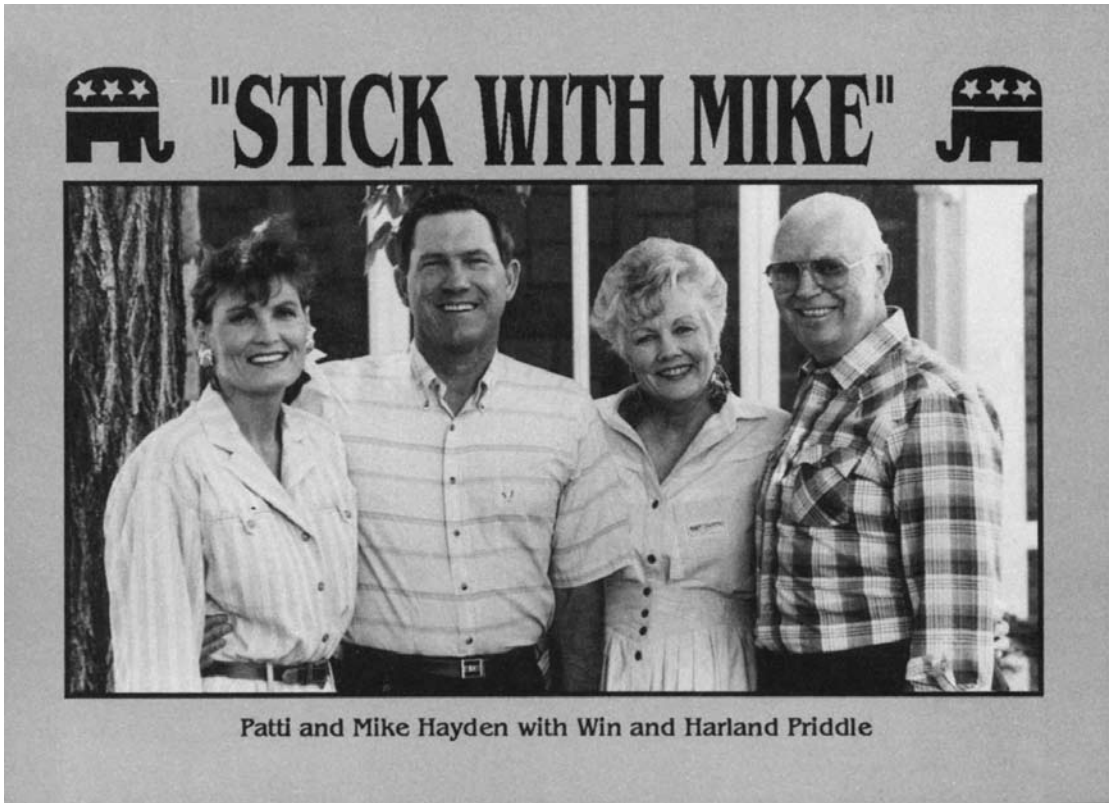
Seeking a Second Term

Jack Walker, for one thing, was getting up there in age. He was still a good lieutenant governor, and he still made good public appearances, but he didn't have any longer the real passion for politics and government. A good guy but let me say—probably the best way to describe it—he was awful low-keyed. And I thought it was time to do two things: one was to think about potentially grooming future governors, grooming someone with at least the potential to run in the future; and two, that was at a time when the concept of lieutenant governor was becoming more proactive. So I wanted somebody who was going to be more active. And that was in the days too, remember this, that more state agencies were merging, and the concept of the lieutenant governor serving as a cabinet secretary, those kinds of things were starting to emerge.

He came and visited with me, and he said, "I want to do it again." But he said, "if you won't commit to taking me next time then I'm going to announce that I'm not going to do it, that I don't want to be on the ticket the second time around." And I said, well, Jack, that's your choice. You're a good guy, I'm not at all dissatisfied with the job you've done, but there are other people I'd like to consider in the second term; particularly some guys that maybe ought to be groomed for the future or some cabinet secretaries who are active and who could be both a cabinet secretary and a lieutenant governor at the same time. So I said, "Jack, I'm not ready to commit to ya that you're going to be on the ticket the second time around, I haven't made a decision." And he was very upset about it. He had been a loyal lieutenant governor, absolutely, but I felt it was time for someone who might be more of an activist, who would engage to a greater extent. [So I picked] Harland Priddle. He was secretary of commerce, hell of a guy. He'd been secretary of agriculture. He'd been director of White House communications in the Nixon White House. Imagine that. And he was real solid, a real solid guy.[45]

44. In his 1994 book, *Time, Politics, and Policies: A Legislative Year* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984), University of Kansas political science professor Burdett A. Loomis offered a comprehensive study of the 1988–1990 period of Kansas politics, focusing on the Kansas legislature and Governor Hayden's priorities, strategies, successes, and failures during that time period. This book is invaluable for any serious study of Governor Hayden and the Kansas legislature of the late 1980s.

45. Harland E. Priddle, who grew up on a farm near Haven, Reno County, was a 1952 graduate of Kansas State University. From 1952 through 1974, he pursued a career in the U.S. Air Force, during which time Colonel Priddle served as deputy commander of the White House Communications Agency. He subsequently returned to the family farm, soon began three years of service, from 1975 until 1978, as assistant secretary of the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson, and then accepted a position with the Hutchinson National Bank and Trust. On January 14, 1982, he was elected only the ninth secretary of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, and in 1986 he was Jack Brier's running mate in an unsuccessful primary election bid for the Republican Party's gubernatorial nomination. Governor Hayden appointed Priddle secretary of the Kansas Department of Commerce in 1987, and in this capacity he played a key role on the governor's Task Force on Rural Communities, to which he was appointed in December 1987. *Sixty-Fifth Annual Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture* (Topeka: Kansas State Board of Agriculture, [1982]), 7; Flentje, *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden*, 197–98; see also "Hayden passes chance to set ticket for 1990," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, December 29, 1988; "Walker says he won't be on '90 ticket," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, September 8, 1989.

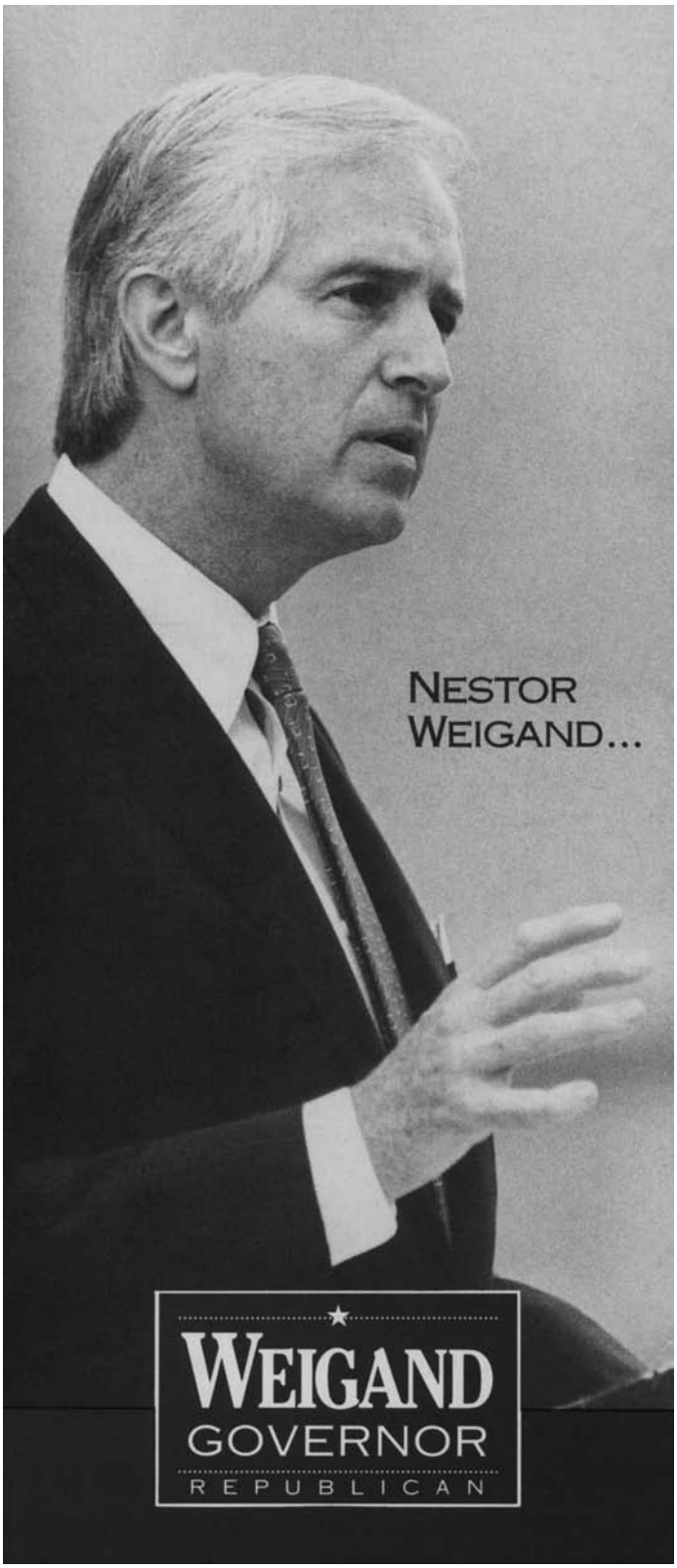


In his reelection bid Hayden chose Harland Priddle—who had served as deputy commander of the White House Communications Agency during Richard Nixon's administration, as secretary of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture from 1982 until 1987, and, upon Hayden's appointment, as secretary of the Department of Commerce from 1987 until 1991—as his running mate. Priddle, pictured above on a piece of 1990 campaign literature, had unsuccessfully run against Hayden as Jack Brier's pick for lieutenant governor in the 1986 gubernatorial primary.

I knew that reelection prospects were going to be difficult. Nestor Weigand, the realtor's candidate, [was my main opponent in the 1990 Republican primary]. He was a realtor, and it was the anti-tax movement, and he had the money to buy the ads. I got these consultants and said, here's the ad [or slogan]: "Don't get caught in Nestor's noose." Well, by God, they dressed up a dummy and they put a white face on it, and they put it in a noose! I saw it and I just went ballistic! I said, "You can't run that! You're going to have to redesign this, this thing. I mean, you got the theme right but you got the graphics terribly, terribly wrong and they're terribly offensive." And so that's when they came up with the stick man that's in the ad now. But in the one you never saw, they had a dummy with white face on it and I said that's insane, you're going to kill us on this one. I do take pride in the fact that I designed that [final] ad myself. I said, "I got to come up with a phrase that set [doubts about Weigand] into people's minds." That's what I did. That's where we came up with the ad and the truth is the ad might have been enough—the election was very close, and it might have been enough to win it. We used it kind of right at the end.[46]

And one of the things that I said we did in '86, is we consolidated the base. In 1990, these people were so mad, you know. Nestor never got over losing and so even though we met with him and even though we tried to work with him, we never could. And there was so much anger out there over this property tax thing that you couldn't bring people together after the [primary] election. So I knew from the start it was going to be tough. I knew that against Carlin we had a real good chance, because they couldn't beat us

46. Nestor R. Weigand, Jr., was a member of a prominent Wichita family and a part of the real estate firm established by his grandfather early in the twentieth century. See "Wichita Business Hall of Fame Archives," http://web.mac.com/web_builder/Junior_Achievement_of_Wichita/Hall_of_Fame_Archives.html.



After the uproar caused by the 1989 tax reassessment Hayden "knew that reelection prospects were going to be difficult." One of Hayden's opponents in the six-way Republican primary was Wichita realtor Nestor R. Weigand, Jr., pictured here on a 1990 campaign pamphlet. Hayden himself devised the slogan with which he fought Weigand: "Don't get caught in Nestor's noose." In the end, though he beat Weigand and his other Republican rivals, Hayden lost in the general election to Democrat Joan Finney.

up on the property tax question any more than they could John. But I also knew that if Joan Finney won then it'd really be tough, because how could we ever overcome this property tax issue that everybody was so upset about? But I knew way back—March, February—I knew it was going to be real hard to be reelected, because the undercurrent of anti-property tax fever was everywhere you went. And I knew that, so I didn't have any unrealistic expectations or anything. When Joan Finney won [the Democratic primary] I knew that it was really, really almost an impossible mountain to climb.

Joan Finney was state treasurer, and early on in that campaign was not that credible a candidate. But when she beat John Carlin, a two-time governor, all of a sudden you really become credible. It's one thing to be state treasurer, which gives you some credibility, but when you beat a two-time former governor in your own party's primary, people say, she must really be legitimate. And it just shot her up in the polls, see, and there was no way we could catch her. So we got closer and closer as time wore on, but I didn't think we could catch her—just given the tremendous lead that she had after the primary. We got fairly close, and then the abortion issue, the right to life issue, became a factor at the end. And it was really a confusing thing to the voters because here you have a pro-life Democrat woman, and a pro-choice Republican man, and so the voters were really, really confused. They weren't sure who was for what, because none of it fit the political stereotype. And one of the things that actually may have hurt us, which we didn't ask for or anything, was one of the pro-choice national women's organizations came to Kansas, not at our request and not even involving us, but [they] staged big rallies in our support. It probably ended up hurting us. I was glad when they left. But they were very concerned about Joan Finney,

as far as her position on choice. They found it very offensive that a woman, particularly a Democrat woman, would have that position. And so it turned out just exactly like I thought it would and exactly like what the polls showed.[47]

Gubernatorial Style

[A governor must recognize that Kansas is] a small state. We only have 1 percent of the nation's population. But we're a state large in landmass. So we're very diverse in that respect. We're spread out. You have to have a good lesson in geography. You have to know and understand this state. What did Mark Twain say, "You tell me where a man gets his corn-pone and I will tell you what his opinion is." People are what they're from. You have to have that sense of geography to govern our state successfully, because it is a melting pot of the rural and urban, western and the eastern. And there are great divisions, political divisions, that if you don't understand those and know those, then they can really wreak havoc with you in the way of successful governance.

So, one of the real secrets is being close to the people. In fact, if you look, since the [implementation of] modern-day governorship in 1974, every one of our governors have come from the statehouse family, every single one. The last person to be elected outside of the statehouse and statehouse family was Bob Docking, who was first elected in 1966. And one of the reasons that is is because if you're in the statehouse family, if you're a speaker of the house, or attorney general, insurance commissioner, secretary of state, state treasurer, lieutenant governor, you already have that sense. You've already been through the school of hard knocks in the sense of what it takes to make this state work and what it takes to be a successful governor. That's why the statehouse family is such a tremendous training ground and it will be the training ground for a vast majority of our governors in the future.

The Hayden Legacy

I would hope that people, when it was all said and done, would feel that you cared: that you cared about them; that you cared about the state; that you were in it for the right reasons; you were in it because of your real, real deep concern about Kansas and about the world in which we live. If after it's all said and done people just say, "Yeah, I remember him and he did a good job," or "I remember him and he was an honest guy," those are the kind of things ultimately [I'd like]. It's not the individual programs that are important. It's when it is said and done, you want people to feel good that you really tried to do the right things while you were in Cedar Crest [the governor's mansion] and in the governor's office. That's really, I think, all you can ask.

I've been blessed in my life to have a lot of experiences, meet a lot of people, be in a lot of places, but I have met some of the very best people in government. And they are people who truly want to serve. They truly are there for the right reasons. And that, I think, is the best you can hope for, that when your time is done, people will feel that way about you. That [they say], "Hey, he gave it his best shot and he really did care about the right things on behalf of folks." That's really what it's ultimately about.

Mike Hayden's 1990 defeat marked the end of his eighteen-year career in elected public office. However, it also marked a new beginning for Hayden, who pursued a career in the very field that had compelled him to leave his family farm and pursue a degree in conservation—natural resources, the environment, and outdoor recreation. In April 1991 President George H. W. Bush named Hayden to be the assistant secretary of the interior for fish and wildlife at the Department of Interior, and from 1993 to 2001 Hayden served as the president and CEO of the American Sportfishing Association, a non-profit trade organization that promotes the conservation of fishery resources and environmental measures that improve the aquatic environment. Hayden returned home to Kansas for good with his appointment by Governor Bill Graves in January 2002 as the secretary of Kansas Wildlife and Parks, a position he was reappointed to by Democratic Governor Kathleen Sebelius in January 2003, and in which he still serves today. His return to the office of KDWP secretary is more than fitting since it was then-Governor Hayden who was able to successfully reorganize the Fish and Game Commission and State Park and Resources Authority into a single cabinet-level department in 1987.[48]

47. Hayden and Priddle polled 138,467 votes (44.7 percent), while the Weigand and Miller slate captured 130,816 (42.3 percent), in the six-way August 1990 Republican primary. Richard Peckham came in third this time around with just over 29,000 (9.4 percent) votes. *Election Statistics, State of Kansas, 1990*, 41–46; for former Governor Carlin's comments on the outcome, see Beatty, "'Be Willing to Take Some Risks to Make Things Happen': A Conversation with Former Governor John W. Carlin," 137–38.

48. See "The Inside Story on Outdoors," *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, December 28, 1986; "Hayden proposes state department of wildlife and parks," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, February 10, 1987; Flentje, *Selected Papers of Governor Mike Hayden*, 85–89.

When asked what he hoped people would remember about him, Hayden replied, "I would hope that people, when it was all said and done, would feel that you cared: that you cared about them; that you cared about the state; that you were in it for the right reasons; you were in it because of your real, real deep concern about Kansas and about the world in which we live." The former governor is pictured here with supporters during his bid for reelection in 1990. Image courtesy of Mike Hayden.

Hayden's energy and commitment to Kansas natural resource protection, organization, and awareness has made him a sought-after speaker throughout the state, and his presentations on Kansas's demographic and environmental changes and challenges have been given at universities, public policy seminars, and organizational meetings across the country. The argument can be made that no other former governor in the United States is more involved in such a key aspect of his or her state than Hayden is with Kansas's natural resource use and protection. As Hayden himself related in the 2003 interview, "maybe in a sense I'm getting a second chance now because my interest was in natural resources, but I felt like we had left a significant unfinished agenda as it relates to water. We did get funding for the state water plan in 1989 and that was one of our major accomplishments. . . . So I was pleased with that. But we didn't get accomplished near what we needed to to ensure the future of Kansas as it relates to water. So maybe it's a little poetic justice that both Governor Graves and now Governor Sebelius have given me an opportunity to reengage on that issue. . . . That's a rewarding thing." KH